The Emotional Experience of Leaders

Managing Critical Incidents

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by

Steven Lake

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Abstract

The emotional experience of leaders (i.e., school principals) who have managed a critical incident involving the death of a student, teacher or staff member was the focus of the dissertation. Secondary issues of communication, decision making, and interpersonal communication were also explored.

A qualitative paradigm using methods of constant comparative analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) embedded within a world view of feminism (Jaggar, 1997), social constructivism (Harre, 1986) and experiential psychology (Greenberg & Safran) identified questions, themes, and understandings. Purposive sampling identified ten participants including three female and seven male principals. Further distinguishing criteria included a separation between public and catholic schools, elementary and senior grades, rural and urban, male and female, and native and non-native. For each participant, two semi-structured interviews of 1 ½ hours each were conducted.

Nine themes were deduced from the data and included the principals' emotions, concerns, internal support (the principals' actions and beliefs that helped them cope with the CI), external support (support systems that assisted the principal personally and managerially), caring support (that principals gave to others), strengths, leadership, learning, and advice.

The findings revealed that principals typically managed their emotions during a CI by compartmentalizing or pushing their feeling aside; managed the feelings of others by listening, making presence felt by being visible, showing concern, and encouraging participation; became "wiser," and "more understanding;" avoided critical incident training and practice; improved interpersonal communication with the most dramatic

increase between principal and counselor; improved relationships with the school community; and were freer to seek support and not have to appear in control both of tasks and emotions when interdependency was acknowledged, which led to more open styles of communication and consultative decision making.

Implications for practice point to the need for critical incident and stress management training; compulsory principal's debriefing; formalized system of administrative support during a CI; policy and procedures for CI practice sessions and updating of teams and networks; establishment of susceptibility markers; information and ongoing communication between head office and principals; and, training and education on the concepts of emotional intelligence.

Contributions of the research include mapping out of the principals' critical incident process and the accompanying emotional states; explaining the relationship between the themes identified and critical incidents; identifying caring support, communication, and having a critical incident manual as key components for positive CI management. Also, a model of effective critical incident management (ECIM) was developed.

As this was an exploratory study, research on the general population of principals is suggested to determine incidence rates, type of incidents, and quality of critical incident management.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the ten principals who shared their experiences of managing a critical incident. Without their openness and courage to share complex thoughts and difficult feelings, this work would not have been possible. Thanks!

I also dedicate this work to my nephew, Jonathan Lake, who has gone through his own critical incident this year. His tenacity, courage, and calm acceptance of an instantaneous change of reality are an inspiration to all who know him.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Issue

Ten years ago, Pitcher and Poland (1992) were raising the alarm bells regarding increasing school violence and decried the lack of crisis intervention teams in the school system. Since that time "many" school districts have introduced crisis intervention teams (Sandoval, 2002, p. 5). Typically, these teams are called into a school when there has been a natural or man-made disaster, car accident resulting in death, or a suicide. These teams are composed of men and women who are trained in brief crisis intervention techniques. They liaise with the principal, come into the school, meet and work with the students, teachers, and parents. After a short stay they leave. It is then up to the principal to organize and monitor any programs or suggestions that the team has put forth. Students, teachers, and families who have been directly and indirectly affected will often be involved with some sort of counselling. But what happens to the principal? The principal is the head teacher and administrator of the school and as such may not see the need for personal help, be too busy organizing after a tragedy to consider his or her needs, and or feel that he or she must project an aura of strong leadership in a time of crisis and therefore not take advantage of available programs.

The researcher assumed that leaders/principals are so busy dealing with the crisis that their needs are pushed aside. Once the crisis has passed, the everyday demands of managing a school take up all of the principals' attention and there would be little time for self-care. If this is indeed the case, what are the resultant effects on the leadership capacities of principals and their ability to manage the school both in the short-term and

long-term? An understanding of the principals' emotional experience of managing a critical incident (CI) and how it affects their leadership ability during and after a crisis is important for all stakeholders in education.

Managing a critical incident involving a death(s) is an emotional experience, in the extreme, for all participants. Even in a large school where the principal may not personally know the deceased, the principal will have to deal with grieving parents, students and teachers. This alone can be a taxing experience. If the principal does know the deceased there is an even stronger emotional component. Goleman (1998a) suggested that emotional competence is the cornerstone for effective and successful management and leadership. If this is so, it would seem prudent to conduct a research project exploring what happens to our principals when they encounter conditions that challenge their emotional competence in the extreme -- managing a critical incident involving death.

Need for Study

Even though the concept of emotional intelligence is gaining ground (Goleman, 1995) there is still a paucity of research regarding emotion and work (Jaggar, 1997). There are even fewer studies on emotion, leadership, and critical incidents and therefore it is imperative that research be conducted to examine whether or not, and how, emotions during critical incidents interact with leaders and affect leadership. What happens during times of high stress brought about by critical incidents? How are emotions managed by the principal both internally and externally? What is the effect on leadership ability during critical incidents and how does the leader integrate his or her experience with the demands of leadership? As critical incidents are increasing in frequency (Juhnke, 1997),

these questions are in urgent need of being examined.

Artz (1994) and Lazarus and Lazarus (1994) have suggested that emotions are evolved mechanisms for channelling behaviour in directions that foster adaptation. If this is so, the emotional self could be seen as an integral aspect of leadership effectiveness through fostering adaptive skills in our critical incident filled world.

Even though the value of emotion is gaining legitimacy, in the area of leadership, Cartesian views hold sway (Mumby & Putnam, 1992). Emotion is seen as 'primitive' and of a lower nature as compared to reason (Descartes, 1649/1952). Interestingly, Bulach (1998) found that poor interpersonal skills were a major factor contributing to administrative weakness that led to a negative work environment. Poor human-relations skill may be indicative of emotional incompetence. By examining the effects of emotionally charged incidents on leaders, further understanding will be gained into the relationship between emotion, communication, and leadership.

Worldview, Philosophical Orientation, and Conceptual Frameworks

The above issues are examined through a worldview that embraces social constructivism, feminism and experiential psychology in which emotion and the study of emotion are seen as valuable and not "subversive of knowledge" as has been the case in traditional western philosophy (Jaggar, 1997, p. 384). Knowledge is seen as co-constructed between the individual and society and people desire self-understanding through a holistic process that involves theory, research, practice and pedagogy. This process is an open-ended dialogue that encompasses openness and reciprocity for the purpose of creating interconnectedness and community. This worldview "construct[s] a conceptual model that demonstrates the mutually constitutive rather than oppositional

relation between reason and emotion" (Jaggar, 1997, p. 394). Emotion as a way of knowing produces knowledge and information grounded in "personal experience, mutual understanding and community" (Putnam & Mumby, 1993, p. 55). Furthermore, emotion can tell us about what is "good, right, and possible" (p. 55) which may be extremely valuable information during a time of crisis.

The conceptual framework chosen was derived from the literature on emotion in business, psychology, sociology, feminism, administration, and philosophy. Guiding concepts from Goleman (1995), Greenberg and Safran (1989), Harre (1986), Jaggar (1997), Putnam & Mumby (1993), and Satre (1976) among others, pointed out the importance of emotion in healthy living and the inseparability of emotion from our experience and awareness. Emotional experience is seen as, not only originating in our biology, but as being taught, learned, and mediated through our interaction with others and the culture in which we are embedded. Explicit in most of the writings is the separation that occurs in our society between emotion and rationality and how this limits our apprehension, interaction and effectiveness in the world.

Another element that is shared between these different fields is the belief that emotional competence can be learned. Whether it is a feminist orientation that believes men too can learn what, especially in the past, has been relegated to the woman's world or business leaders expounding on the critical importance of emotional intelligence for the profitability of the corporation, there is agreement that emotional competency can be learned. This ability to learn and construct knowledge in and with society is an important aspect of social constuctivism (Harre, 1986).

The critical conceptual framework for this research was nested within the

combined concepts of feminism (Jagar, 1997), social constructivism (Harre, 1986), and experiential psychology (Greenberg & Safran, 1989) as explained above. This critical conceptual framework has guided my formulation of the semi-structured interview and worldview regarding emotion. How the principals in this study negotiated a highly emotional experience and what influenced their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours became areas of interest. What aspects of emotional regulation within themselves and externally made their decisions effective or ineffective? And finally, what did these principals learn?

It should be noted that even though the researcher included a feminist perspective as part of his worldview when approaching the subject of emotions, this is not a gender study and feminist forms of analysis are not used when interpreting the data.

Significance of the Study

As stated earlier, this study is needed due to the lack of research regarding leaders, emotions and critical incidents. At a micro-level this study delineates the elements that are crucial to the successful management of a CI both from an organizational and personal perspective. It is hoped that by elucidating these qualities principals will be able to enhance their managing and leadership abilities concerning critical incidents as well as gain an understanding of self-care.

At the macro-level, the experience of managing a school death is so emotionally charged that understanding how principals cope, manage and transform a tragedy into an event where people feel supported, cared for, and ultimately experience an enhanced sense of self and community would be a significant contribution to both practice and theory.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to principals in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada who managed a critical incident that involved the death(s) of students, teachers or staff. Even though others in the school may have similar experiences, the principal is the formal leader and takes ultimate responsibility for all decisions emanating from the school. It is the emotional experience of the person occupying this unique position that is the focus of investigation. The delimitation to principals in the Province of Saskatchewan was a restriction due to the geographic placement of the researcher (in Saskatchewan) and funding which limited travel to within the provincial boundaries. The delimitation to critical incident(s) involving death was a deliberate focussing on one of the most intense forms of critical incidents. Even though events other than death are classified as critical incidents in both the psychological and educational literature base, in this study, only critical incidents involving death are seen as an appropriate inclusionary criterion.

Finally, the purposive sampling technique to select the sample was used to facilitate the research project as it is time effective compared to other selection processes and contacts already existed for the researcher within the educational community.

Limitations

The emotional experience of principals managing critical incidents was strictly a post-hoc analysis and a self-report. The perceptions of other participants at the time of the critical incident on the principal's behaviour could be different than that of the principal's self-analysis.

This was exploratory research designed to increase knowledge and shed light on

the principals' processes and emotional experiences while managing a critical incident involving death and, as such, there was not a focus on generalizability. From a qualitative perspective this is not seen as a limitation. However, as will be seen in later Chapters, even though each principal's experience is unique there were many commonalities and similarities in their experiences. A broader based research effort (e.g., survey) using quantitative methods could be seen as the next logical step in the process of discovery to see if these commonalities may be generalizable.

Another limitation occurred in the selection of participants. There may be a self-selection bias towards principals who felt that they had effectively managed a critical incident and this may not accurately reflect typical experiences. No principals in this study defined their management of the critical incident as a failure. Even though the principals in this study described their management as effective they pointed out that the event was not without difficulties and even outright mistakes. However, these "mistakes" were minor in nature and this study is devoid of information concerning major mistakes made by principals and the effects that such mistakes would have on critical incident management.

Assumptions

There was an assumption that principals were self-aware, reflective and thus able to provide a rich or thick description of their experiences. It was assumed that the principals would be willing to share their experience of managing a critical incident and the emotions experienced. It was further assumed that they would have adequate memory recall of an emotionally charged time.

The assumptions and the reality were not perfect matches. There was a range of

willingness to explore the emotional aspects of the questioning with some principals more familiar and at ease with emotional concepts and language than others. This tended to point to the differences in beliefs around emotions and emotional expression. Despite these differences all the principals were able to identify feelings experienced at the time of the critical incident. Also, all the principals were willing to reflect on and explore any line of questioning the researcher pursued. There was an acknowledgement, often openly stated, of the importance of the experience and the research being conducted.

Another area of difference involved recall of events. There was probably a certain level of anxiety at the first interview and typically many critical events were forgotten and brought up at the second interview. The principals talked about how "surprised" they were at having forgotten those events during the first interview and how the interview had stimulated them to remember the events later that day or in the evening.

Despite these differences, as was expected, the principals supplied a thick and rich description of their experiences while managing a critical incident. The differences between initial assumptions and encountered reality necessitated flexibility on the researcher's behalf, as the interviews tended to loop back on themselves and not follow a linear path of progression. This held most true in the second interview when new deaths had been experienced between interviews or forgotten deaths were remembered.

Definitions

The following section provides definitions of typical language used in the literature base specific to psychology, stress and critical incidents. Enhanced definitions of certain terms are elucidated in following sections as needed.

Critical Incident (CI)

For the purposes of this study, a CI was defined as any crisis that involved the traumatic death of a student, teacher, administrator or staff member from the school in which the principal works.

Traumatic Death

Traumatic death is defined as an unexpected death or death after an illness. Some examples of traumatic death include: heart attack, suicide, car accident, shooting, death from drug overdose, sports injury, and natural disasters.

Critical Incident Stress (CIS)

CIS is the stress reaction accompanying exposure to a critical incident and can be either normal or pathological.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

The process whereby CIS is managed by preventative strategies including pre-incident planning, education, and training; crisis intervention including CISM teams, counselling and deployment of predetermined organizational individuals and groups for crisis management; and postvention strategies including assessment of at risk children, examination of the crisis to determine improvements, continued supportive management of the organization and stakeholders, and support for team members (Mitchell & Everly, 2001).

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

CISD is post trauma intervention with an established or formal group used for the mitigation of post trauma stress. (see p. 54 for further description)

Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISMT)

CISMT is the group of people who come into a crisis environment to help participants of a CI cope with the situation. This group can be external to the organization or internal.

Trauma Emergency Response Team (TERT)

Same as CISMT above.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is an intense reaction to trauma often defined by 'flashbacks,' concentration problems, dissociation and cognitive, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Psychotraumatology

Psychotraumatology is the field of study including psychological stress related constructs such as: stress, burnout, vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue and secondary stress reaction, critical incident, critical incident stress (CIS), critical incident stress debriefing (CISD), and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Mitchell & Everly, 2001).

Affect/feeling/emotion

In this study these constructs are operationalized as having the same meaning. An emotion is a complex response to the environment that involves our whole body including chemical and hormonal reaction, muscular response, smooth tissue response, felt feelings and cognitions (subjective state) and an impulse to act (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994).

Overview of the Dissertation

The following chapters in the dissertation include the literature review in chapter two, methodology in chapter three, demographics in chapter four, data analysis in chapter five, and a discussion of findings in chapter six. In the literature review, the history of emotion, as reflected upon by philosophers and scientists, was examined. In the literature, the value of emotions can be seen changing over the course of history from fear a of emotionality and the need to control emotions, to the most recent conceptualisations in psychology, philosophy, sociology, business and feminist literature where emotions are seen as valuable sources of information in which emotional states can be harnessed for productive good (e.g., improved communication, relationships, decision-making and physical and psychological health). Other issues explored were the relationship of emotion to leadership, crisis management, and the challenges the principal must negotiate when managing a critical incident.

The chapter on methodology explains the choice of using a qualitative paradigm to explore the question – what was the principals' emotional experiences as they managed a critical incident involving death and how did it affect their ability to lead? Methods of data collection, selection of participants, instrumentation and the use of interviews for data gathering are also discussed.

Chapter four begins with a description of the principals from a demographic point of view; setting the context, and identifying the specific deaths discussed in the interview. Chapter five, an analysis from the transcripts and researcher's observations, led to the establishment of the themes of emotion, concern, internal support, external support, caring support, principals' strengths, leadership, learning and advice.

Chapter six includes a summary of the preceding chapters, answers the research questions, and includes a discussion of the themes and issues that arose from the data. Also, implications for theory, practice and research are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The literature review examined four areas that constitute a base for exploring the emotional effects on principals when managing critical incidents. The areas are: 1) emotion as a way of knowing, 2) emotion and leadership, 3) crisis management, and 4) critical incident management in schools.

Emotion as a Way of Knowing

> One cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity. Neither can exist without the other nor can they be dichotomized. . . . Neither objectivism nor subjectivism, nor yet psychologism is propounded here, but rather subjectivity and objectivity in constant relationship. (Freire, 1970, p. 35)

Through a brief examination of the philosophical, sociological, and psychological history of emotion it is evident that emotion has been seen as an uncontrollable force and thus, of less value than rationality. Until recently, the literature referred to emotions as being of and for women, illogical, and therefore not of value in men's lives (Jaggar, 1997). In a similar fashion, emotion has not been considered important in the field of organization and policy making (Putnam & Mumby, 1993).

With developments in philosophy, and more recently in psychology, emotion is now being considered as having value both personally and socially. Extrapolating on these recent views, emotion is considered to be a source of knowledge that motivates leadership, justice, ethics, and morality (Noddings, 1984). Furthermore, women's experience with emotion offers a different perspective from that of men, which can be used in increasing overall understanding of personal, interpersonal and organizational relationships (Jaggar, 1997). These insights may lead to new ways of engaging in policy-making, organizational structuring, and understanding the effects and management of

emotions during critical incidents.

A Brief History of Emotion Theory

Some of the earliest writings on emotion in the Western World began with Plato. Plato portrayed emotions as irrational urges that must be controlled by reason (Solomon, 1983) and used the analogy where horses (emotion) were directed by the charioteer (reason). Plato recognized emotions as a powerful force and, at the appropriate time, having value (e.g., in moments of danger fear was intelligent). Plato, cited in Ross (1972), referred to the spirited element which works with reason to control the appetites. An example would be when we angrily force ourselves to look at injustice to fan the flames of outrage (p. 56). This spirited element, Ross suggested, can be compared to our conscience and is a mode of feeling (p. 57). Ross explicated Plato's theory as a prototype for rationality, which places a tremendous emphasis on feeling (p. 57). Feelings are often in conflict with one another; therefore, reason and knowledge are needed to form a complete synthesis.

When Aristotle studied emotion at Plato's Academy, he investigated the phenomenon from the psychological, rhetorical, poetic, political, and ethical aspects via deductive analysis (Fortenbaugh, 1975). This analysis led Aristotle to believe that emotional response included cognitive and physiological aspects which contribute to the benefit of the group and the individual through the process of catharsis. Even though passions were allowed their place, they were always subservient to reason (Solomon, 1983).

After Hippocrates in 500 B.C. and his suggestion of the four humours (blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm) to identify temperament types (cheerfulness, sadness,

anger and sluggishness) and Galen's use of this classificatory system to explain how bodily health can be affected by the psyche (approximately 150 A.D.), there was little emotion theory developed until Descartes in the 17th century (Watson & Evans, 1991).

Descartes (1952; orig. 1649) envisioned emotions or "passions," as he called them, as separate, animalistic, and of a lower form when compared to reason. The passions were of the body, whereas reason was of the mind. This separation of the mind and body was the beginning of the dualistic thinking that was to pervade science, reaching its zenith in psychology with Skinner and behaviourism in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Hume (1957/1739) felt that the passions were the motivating forces in life and that factual knowledge could not of itself, motivate the will. From an ethical perspective the purpose of morals is to motivate the will. It follows that facts alone do not constitute values, but require emotions as well (Ross, 1972, p. 51). However, it was reason that was called upon to ascertain the meanings and the actions needed to respond to these emotions (Oatley, 1992). This is elegantly stated in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature:*

> Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and even in common life, than to talk of the combat of passion and reason, to give preference to reason, and to assert that men are only so far virtuous as they conform themselves to its dictates. (Hume, 1957, p.154)

This separation, duality, and minimizing of emotion can be seen as reflecting the opposition of the male and female. Men situate themselves in the realm of reason and women in the realm of emotion (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Typically, maleness is associated with order, the mind, knowledge and the subjugation of nature (Jaggar, 1997). On the other hand, women and emotion are of the body and the opposite of reason, order, and knowledge (Mumby & Putnam, 1992). Dewey (1960) had no such

misapprehensions, as is evident when discussing values and the insights that arise from sensitivity and emotionality. He stated that, "Emotional reactions form the chief materials of our knowledge of ourselves and of others" (p.129).

In opposition to rationalism and behaviouralism (which ruled out choice, reason, or insight), there was existentialism. Sartre (1948) suggested that the subject experiencing the emotion could only do this with an object (i.e., another person, who can be real or imaginary). Subject and object are bound together, inseparable, and people perceive the world through their emotions. As people encounter difficulties in the world, emotion springs forth and transforms the relationship to the object, thereby changing the world.

The next movement in research led to the cognitive and evolutionary theories of emotion. On the cognitive side, Lazarus (1975) rejected the idea of emotions as motivations. Rather, emotion was seen as a response system enabling the individual to evaluate, recognize and cope with a situation. He defined emotion as a complex disturbance that includes three main components: subjective affect, physiological changes, and action impulses. These action impulses have instrumental and expressive qualities that are modulated by cognitive appraisal. Viscott (1976) extended this line of thinking when he described emotions or feeling as our sixth sense which "interprets, arranges, directs and summarizes the other five" (p. 11).

On the evolutionary side, Izard (1972) believed that affects (feelings/emotions) are primarily facial responses that are genetically hard-wired. Unlike the cognitive theorists, Izard sees emotion as "the primary motivational system for human beings" (1972, p. 3) and as having inherently adaptive functions. In the cognitive paradigm, the

animal would have to think before it could feel. This is a slow process in life and death situations where innate responses would be more efficient. Thinking in this situation is not conducive to species' survival.

The preceding theories, other than the existentialists, position emotion as a biological process and are known in psychology as *organismic* theories. Other noted theorists that supported these notions included, Darwin (1872), early Freud (1895) and James (1884). They believed that emotions come into existence "without reflection" (Crawford et al., 1992, p. 23).

In the 1980's a social constructionist conception of the nature of emotion emerged in which emotion was assumed to be constructed within the social context, which includes language and culture and has its roots with the existentialists. This paradigm has been supported by Averill (1983) and de Rivera (1984) who define emotions as social relationships. De Rivera and Grinkis (1986) explained emotion, "as a relationship between the person rather than as something within the person. . . . Thus, an emotion is not an internal response to an external situation, but a transaction between person and situation" (p. 366). In a more encompassing vein, Harre (1986; see also Radley, 1988; Ratner & Stettner, 1991) pointed out that emotions do not just happen but are part of an unfolding process of common "dramatic scenarios." This unfolding encompasses: 1) language and its use; 2) the moral order of a given society; 3) the social function of the emotion; 4) the final form of the unfolding situation; and 5) the system of rules that maintain, change, account and teach the actors. Emotion, in a social constructionist paradigm, was seen as a social activity co-constructed by the individual and the society.

In all societies certain emotions are valued or given priority while other emotions

are given less consideration (Kitayama & Markus, 1994). In business and academia emotions are seen as irrational and the person who is in control (emotionally) is seen as virtuous (Putnam & Mumby, 1992).

Examination of Rationality and Emotionality

Traditionally, to equate emotion and knowledge was to position oneself at the opposite pole of rationality. This is unfortunate as modern theories of emotion and cognition see these two concepts as inextricably entwined (Carek, 1990; Greenberg & Safran, 1989; Laird & Bressler, 1992; Lane & Schwartz, 1987). To further explore this situation the concepts of rationality, bounded rationality, emotionality and bounded emotionality are examined. Through examining these concepts, it will be demonstrated how limiting pure reason is and the value of emotion as a way of knowing.

Rationality. Rationality is defined as a perspective choice aimed at maximizing gain through intentional, reasoned, goal-directed behaviour (Mumby & Putnam, 1992). In this statement a dichotomy is set up between not only reason and emotion but also between men and women and gain can only be maximized by reason. To use non-reason, illogic or emotion to maximize gain would not be rational. As reason is considered to be solely in the realm of men, therefore, women cannot be part of rationality and are excluded (Blackmore, 1989). Women were identified as being emotional and belonging to the private realm of the home while reason was seen as being of and for men and belonging to the public sphere (Shakeshaft & Hanson, 1986). Consequently, emotion has been banished from the halls of power as were women. Furthermore, in order to maintain this relationship "feminine values and experience" are denigrated (Blackmore, 1989, p. 113). Emotion could not be a source of knowledge and people who were *too emotional*

(i.e., women) were labeled as "crazy" (Crawford et al., 1992). Reason becomes the method for attaining control and power while emotion/feelings become the enemy. In modern times emotion has been given short shift in moral reasoning by Kohlberg, in the philosophy of Kant, and in the political philosophy of Rawls (Crawford et al., 1992).

Bounded rationality. Herbert Simon (1976), in his critique of pure rationality, stated that to know all the variables and information for bureaucratic decision making is impossible. Also, the bureaucracy and the actor have built in limitations and biases. Therefore, optimal decisions are impossible and decisions are made on the best information available at the time through "rules of thumb" and minimal information processing (Mumby & Putnam, 1992). This leads to "satisficing" which is a means-end chain in which organizations select the first alternative that meets the stated goal rather than searching for optimal choices. According to Mumby and Putnam, he (Simon, 1989) "depicted holistic forms of reasoning such as intuition and judgement as nonrational and decisions based on emotions as irrational" (p. 469). This idea leads to emotion being devalued, trivialized and deemed inappropriate for work.

Emotion. One of the most comprehensive definitions of emotions is by Lazarus and Lazarus (1994):

> Emotions are complex reactions that engage both our minds and our bodies. These reactions include: a subjective mental state, such as the feeling of anger, anxiety, or love; an impulse to act, such as fleeing or attacking, whether or not it is expressed overtly; and profound changes in the body, such as increased heart rate or blood pressure. Some of these bodily changes prepare for and sustain coping actions, and others - such as posture, gestures, and facial expressions - communicate to others what we are feeling, or want others to believe we are feeling. An emotion is a personal life drama, which has to do with the fate of our goals in a particular encounter and our beliefs about ourselves and the world we live in. It is aroused by an appraisal of the personal significance or meaning of what is happening in that encounter. The dramatic plot differs from one

emotion to another, each emotion having its own particular story. (p. 151)

Lazarus and Lazarus' definition is apolitical and comprehensive. It takes into account the physiological and cognitive processes that occur when in the experience of an emotion. The definition also encapsulates drive theory, evolutionary theory and social theories of emotion. The definition is broad enough to include women's reality especially when an emotion is seen as "a personal life drama, which has to do with the fate of our goals in a particular encounter and our beliefs about ourselves and the world we live in." The beliefs and subjective reality of the individual is given importance. This definition has a positive orientation about the value of emotion. Emotion is not seen as being limited or detrimental. Emotion helps us to sustain coping actions and enhances communication. Emotions occur to make us aware that an event with "personal significance" is occurring. In a sense, emotions alert us to two things, our environment and our response to that environment. Emotions give us *information.*

Bounded emotionality. Bounded emotionality is an alternative form of organizing that incorporates intersubjective limitations/constraints that individuals must exercise in community. "Nurturance, caring, community, supportiveness and interrelatedness are fused with individual experience to shape organizational experience" and policy-making while "contextual relations govern the socially fluid order of goals" (Mumby & Putnam, 1992, p. 474). Policy and organizational action are based on the tolerance of ambiguity rather than lowering ambiguity through "satisficing" as in bounded rationality. Responsibility to others and interrelatedness are keys to the concept of bounded emotionality. It is through our emotional ability that people can connect and feel for others and thus make decisions that support the community. Information and

knowledge gathered through our emotions therefore becomes vital and valued. The dualism between mind and body found in rationalism and bounded rationality is replaced with nurturance and supportiveness, thus merging the conception and execution of work and avoiding fragmented and alienated labour (Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Noddings, 1984). The community that works from bounded emotionality would support policies that allow for expression at work so that both males and females would be congruent in whom they are. In other words, if a patient dies, it would be appropriate for both doctors and nurses to cry if they so felt. There would be no need to maintain hierarchies or professionalism based on emotional control. Training programs would not hijack human feeling (emotional labour) for profit but would support individual response styles that facilitate expression, communication and understanding.

The myth of rationality. Mumby and Putnam (1992) defined rationality as a perspective choice aimed at maximizing gain through intentional, reasoned, goal-directed behaviour. From a feminist perspective, the definition and use of the word rational sets up an immediate duality. Rational is what is logical and typically not emotional. When we use the word rational, its opposite, though not stated, is implied. If I am rational and you are not, you must be irrational or emotional. "Stop being so emotional" is often used in many arguments between husband/man (rational) and wife/woman (emotional). This meaning of rationality creates men and women to be in opposition within our culture. In our society rational is better and emotional worse (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and rationality is positive and emotionality negative (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Emotions are often depicted as being, 'disruptive,' 'illogical,' 'biased,' and 'weak' (p. 36). Emotion is seen as the polar opposite of rationality, sensibility or intelligent (Lutz, 1988).

In addition, emotion is linked to the private sphere and not considered relative to instrumental goals of organizations (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Rationality then becomes idealized and given a privileged position in organization and policy-making.

An instrumental interpretation of rationality also assumes that the rational actor knows what he wants and that this need or desire is constant. All action is oriented to maximize these preferences. Rationality then becomes equated with maximization of self-interest. This is diametrically opposed to theories in which interdependence is stressed (e.g., feminist, social constructivist). A rational person from a feminist perspective becomes someone who "values her abilities to empathize and connect with particular others by recognition not ignorance of social interdependence" (Blackmore, 1989, p. 116).

To be rational in the traditional sense is to ignore human biology. We are social animals that survive on a daily basis through our interdependence and emotional awareness. To abstract rationality and create abstract principles leaves out contextual and inductive thinking which is characteristic of the ability to empathize or take the role of the other. In so doing, a polar opposition is created between reason and emotion.

This dualistic splitting of emotion and rationality (or cognition) is arbitrary and not supported any longer by most psychologists who see that emotions and cognitions are intermixed to create an affective experience (Carek, 1990; Greenberg & Safran, 1989; Laird & Bressler, 1992; Lane & Schwartz, 1987). The two work hand-in-hand. A similar sentiment is expressed by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1993) when discussing feminist constructivism. They stated that emotional intensity precedes cognitive transformation which leads to a new way of seeing with emotion becoming a powerful

thinking mechanism especially when combined with logic.

Traditional management is still set in the Cartesian mind body dualism and is constantly trying to control emotion in the workplace (Mumby & Putnam, 1992). This is evident in "emotional labour" where employees are forced to project company dictated emotions resulting in the co-opting of emotional experience (p. 469). A person of lower status never demonstrates anger at someone of higher status, though the reverse can often happen. As women are typically lower than men in organizations their inferior status is reinforced by power imbalances that are sustained by actions that are demeaning and meant to control. Emotional experiences are marginalized (p. 470).

As bureaucracy perpetuates the belief that rationality and control of emotions is essential to the organization it also constructs and favours patriarchal forms of gender relations (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). In organizations that control emotions the effect is suppressed disagreements, elimination of employee voice, and reduction of information flow, unjust actions go unreported and there is a lack of necessary inter-employee communication (Walldron & Krone, 1991).

The most damning account of rationality without emotionality in policy is found in Bauman's (1989) account of the holocaust. In order for the Nazi regime to achieve its ends, four conditions had to be met. One, humans had to be transformed into objects (i.e., quantitative measures). Two, the elevation of formal rationality above substantive and through bureaucratic procedures apply a means-ends calculus. Three, rationalization is used to create social distance between cause and effects, intentions and consequences, perpetrators and victims (see also Marsden & Townley, 1996, p. 672). The more rational an organization is, according to Bauman, the easier it is to cause suffering. Four, make

sure that the oppressed seem to have choice in the negative decisions that affect them. Then the rationality of their choice becomes a weapon for the rulers. Point number four makes sense as a method of consolidating oppressive policy. However, Bauman does not explain how this worked in the attempted extermination of the Jewish people. He may be referring to the idea floated by the Nazi's among the Jewish population that they were being resettled in safe havens for their own benefit. Apparently this was believed by some people as they willingly, or at least without resistance, left their homes for this new "promised land." The deviousness and horror of the Nazi regime reminds us that, "reason alone cannot be the arbiter of organizational [policy and] practice" (Marsden & Townley, 1996, p. 672).

Valuing emotion. Valued emotionality can bring about an atmosphere of care, enhanced work feeling and increased employee participation (Nelson, 1988) which leads to the formation of community in which members are supported and can tolerate criticism. In an environment of emotional openness conflicts are oriented for a win-win outcome while simultaneously protecting self-esteem. When emotion is valued in research and in life the end result is information and knowledge that reflects the lived experience of the individual and their community (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Furthermore, valuing emotion helps orient the person in ethical decision making (Jaggar, 1997) and this sensitivity to the needs of others can be the instigation for change in policy and organization.

Caring. This sensitivity towards others demonstrates itself as caring. Typically, caring is seen in child rearing (mostly done by women), nursing, teaching and homemaking (Nodding, 1984). Feminists see the ability to care including both men and

women and a desirable moral orientation. Viewed from this perspective, the splitting of love and work, which puts the expressive capacities on women's shoulders and instrumental abilities in the male domain, reflects an unbalanced conception of maturity. This favours the separateness of the individual over connectedness and autonomy over the interdependence of love and care (Gilligan, 1982). If a feminist perspective is chosen, then one will engage in a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. This would have consequences not only on policy (it would be more situational and emergent) but also on delivery by retaining flexibility in application and maintaining power with the participants rather than with the writers of the policy.

Traditionally, in the "public sphere of power, love is suggested to be out of place or irrelevant" (Parkin, 1993, p.169). How sad. What would business, organization and policy-making look like if the undergirding ideology was one of love? As women have entered the workforce in great numbers in the last twenty years men have reacted with fear to the invasion of the 'irrational' into the workplace and the threat to organizational discipline. Discipline is about control and in this case about control of women's feelings in particular. But what about men's feelings you ask? Don't they exhibit feelings at work?

The myth of the unemotional working male. Males typically are allowed to express anger in business and even this is not as highly regarded as the concept of the cool, efficient and detached manager or boss (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). The man who is in control and can analyze his realm with equanimity is seen as the ideal form. However, this is indeed an idealized version of events and though certain professions (e.g., doctors) try to maintain their emotional and professional demeanor or distance, the costs are high

both psychologically and physically (p. 48). Emotional distancing robs the male worker of valuable information (the client who feels uncomfortable with authority figures may withhold embarrassing but important information) and the stress of emotional incongruence leads to illness, both physical and mental (Berry & Pennebaker, 1993). Therefore, "stress and emotion are seen in terms of personal weakness and not as a result of organizational structures and pressures" (Parkin, 1993, p. 184). Men who express emotion are seen as weak and like women (Hearn, 1993). Therefore, it is not that men are unemotional; it is just that they have set up a system which defines emotionality as for women and non-emotionality for men. Emotional strength is defined by the absence of emotions and emotional weakness by the expression of emotions. This inversion of definitional terms is an example of rationality applied to emotionality. What cannot be understood must be controlled and reconstituted in an ordered form. Hence, emotional strength is defined as being unemotional.

> Emotions are further separated from the worker by in house counseling services with the result that emotion is further stigmatized and pathologized. Emotions, grieving, illness, and stress are confined in the private realm or dealt with in the public realm through counselling services which have the connotations of weakness and stigma. In this way emotions are controlled by those in power defining what is meant by emotionality, and then imposing a pathology or expression of emotions which do not fit the criteria of organizational strength. (Parkin, 1993, p.185)

Men are indeed emotional and there is a cost physically and emotionally for men in trying to live up to the myth of the unemotional male. Furthermore, men perceive emotional displays as weakness and are so confronted with the whole concept of emotionality that they pathologize it in order to feel in some sort of control.

Constructing emotion: A feminist perspective. Jaggar (1997) explained emotions as active engagements by the participant in which the world of feelings and knowledge are constructed. This process occurs as people are engaged in the activity of social life. Emotions are an experiential evaluative process which implies the notion of values. Values come about through our judgements made possible through observation which, in turn, is affected by our emotion. Emotion, observation and values are inter-dependent on one another, each shaping and defining the other. The study of emotion, values and observation inevitably leads to the formation of judgements and or knowledge.

Emotion and epistemology. Emotion, like sensory perception, is necessary for survival. One of our most basic survival mechanisms, fight or flight, is an emotional response and this emotional response cues us as to the safety or danger of any given situation. Emotions propel us to action, whether writing a novel or rushing to someone's aid. Emotions have intrinsic and instrumental value. The emotion of love feels good in and of itself as well as propelling us to action. Emotion can be a source of knowledge that informs us about our environment (Artz, 1994). Even the positivist tradition, though excluding emotion as a way of knowing, does allow for emotion as a means of hypothesis formation (e.g., dreams, hunches, intuition). Unlike the positivist tradition that equates knowledge with power and control, a feminist position envisages emotion and knowledge as co-constructed for the purpose of creating interconnectedness and community. A feminist epistemology would "construct a conceptual model that demonstrates the mutually constitutive rather than oppositional relation between reason and emotion" (Jaggar, 1997, p. 394). In this system emotion is seen as a potentially reliable source and the myth of dispassionate inquiry revealed for what it is - a self-deluding sham that

"fulfills certain social and political functions" (i.e., maintaining the status quo) (p. 394).

Crawford et al. (1992) provided an example of how to do research and construct knowledge in a manner that was "liberating rather than oppressive" (p. 1). The ways in which women construct emotion was the topic in which they explored themselves, society and the construction of emotion. They argued that emotion and knowledge are intrinsically intertwined and following the works of Harre (1986) and Averill (1983) postulated that emotion is "constituted in the intersubjective" (Crawford et al., p. 9). Emotion becomes the interaction between people and the self in reflection. This concept of emotion being created and recreated in reflection is a theme that is rarely seen in the literature base. Crawford et al. (1992) envisaged emotion as a process that is co-constructed and amenable to change through reflection both in the moment and in the future.

The concepts of morality, ethics and justice are prominent in the stories that form the database of Crawford's research. This idea of the interdependence of morality, ethics and justice implies a cognitive appraisal and Crawford et al. borrow freely from Arnold's (1970) work in which she proposed that a psychological interpretation of a situation is needed for the production of emotion. This interpretation may or may not be deliberate. However, it is immediate. It may be intuitive but not instinctive. The intuition is based on memory and is non-deliberate and automatic. In deliberate appraisal, affect involves reflection. In other words, "emotion is born of a personal experience in a matrix of experience" (Crawford et al., 1992; p. 24). Also,

> It may appear that, once constructed, emotions overcome us and that motive causes behaviour. But it should not be forgotten that the emotions and motives were constructed and actively produced in human beings' attempts to make sense of their world, including their own psychological

> responses. There is always room for deliberation and therefore always room for modification or education of our emotions and action. . . . It is in these deliberations that we construct ourselves as agents. (p. 122)

Furthermore, Crawford argued that through the engagement of emotion in life, how one expresses emotion, how it is perceived and judged and the consequences meted out (justice) profoundly affects the construction of self. Emotion becomes a way of knowing oneself in relationship to self, others, and to society.

Expanding the concept of appropriate emotions. Jaggar (1997) suggested that for women and men certain emotions are considered appropriate and others not. As mentioned previously, for men, the less emotion expressed the more culturally appropriate. Women, on the other hand, can express nice emotions or cry or show fear but anger or expressions of power are not culturally supported (Mumby & Putnam, 1992).

Emotions in the workplace are further controlled, or should we say dominated, by the ruling cultural elite (MacKie, 1987) who hope to suppress people not in control, whether deliberately or unconsciously. Blackmore (1989) stated that even positivistic research concludes that decision-making is value and theory laden, "ideologically prescribed, generally based on inadequate and even incorrect information and consequently emotive" (p. 101). If this is so, understanding and gaining expertise in emotions would be seen as an asset, not a weakness.

Jaggar (1997) suggested that a feminist approach to knowledge making is neither hierarchal nor foundationalist but is symbolized by the upward spiral. Emotions, reason and observation are on the same level and interdependent as the development of one affects the development of all. Furthermore, "critical reflection on emotion is not a self-

indulgent substitute for political analysis and political action" (p. 400). Feminist theory expands the potential for knowledge and understanding by pointing out what is missing, what has been excluded (Blackmore, 1989), and suggests that emotion has always affected policy, policy implementation and organizational structure.

The Place of Emotion in Leadership

A more detailed examination of the relationship between emotion and leadership will now be explored. Until recently, the idea that emotion might be of value to the organization, and specifically for leadership, was not seriously entertained.

Putnam & Mumby (1993) believed that emotions have knowledge value that can be utilized by leaders, in particular male leaders, who traditionally have not seen emotion as a valuable tool in decision making. The devaluing of emotion in organizations, the value of emotion, how to incorporate emotion into organizational and leadership consciousness and the concept of *emotional intelligence* and how it relates to leadership are examined to demonstrate the value of emotion and emotional competence for leaders.

Organizations and Emotion

The ideal manager or leader has been defined as someone, usually a man, who had his emotions in check. He was emotionally detached and from this supposedly unbiased state was able to make clear-headed and right decisions unclouded by the toxic effects of emotion (Grogan, 1996; Jaggar, 1997; Lutz, 1988; Parkin, 1993; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). There appears to be a strong need to suppress strong or negative emotions in organizations. Parkin (1993) stated that, "the impersonal, hierarchal rational/legal basis of bureaucracies, and the socialization into professionalism, are features of organizational life which contribute to the suppression and denial of feeling

and emotion" (p. 179). Fineman (1991) furthers this thought with the statement that:

> The limited consideration of emotion in organization theory results from a desire a) to separate conceptions of people from those of organizations, b) to reify the organizations, c) to separate processes of rationality from those of emotion, and d) a cultural, especially Western male, predilection to suppress, deny or minimise the role of emotions. (p. 5)

This devaluing of emotion extends into organizations and to the men who traditionally have led them (Hearn, 1993). The organization, its participants, and leaders have been constructed as 'unemotional' especially in relationship to women. However, men do show emotion within certain limits and in opposition to what women exhibit. Typically, men are not allowed to cry or show fear, sadness or joy. The recent literature has started to expose the fact that men are indeed emotional though they may feel constrained or limited in their expression (Flam, 1990; Albrow, 1992). If men are indeed emotional, by inference, so are their organizations and leaders (who are still mostly men).

This idea is supported by literature which suggests that the workplace is a hotbed of emotions and whether it is sexual politics, use and or abuse of power, or sexual harassment, the act of dominating is a powerful *feeling* (Parkin, 1993). Bureaucracies are hierarchal and men (typically) control through their authority, the use of language, and by defining what is emotionally appropriate within the organization even if that means not being aware that there is an "emotional agenda" (p. 169). As Hearn (1993) stated, "All people, including men, may be constructed as emotional all the time" (p. 149).

Reasons for Emotion

What then are the positive aspects of emotionality and how can they be incorporated into organizational and leadership consciousness? What follows are philosophical and empirical findings on the value of emotions.

Viscott (1976) equated emotional unawareness as being, "blind deaf or paralysed" (p.11). Our feelings are like a sixth sense which "interprets, arranges, directs and summarizes the other five" (p. 11). Feelings can be used as a guide with which to interpret the world one is experiencing. Flynn (1995) noted that emotions aid in "adaptive human interactions with the environment" (p. 366) and are the medium through which people become aware of their connection to others in their environment and emotions are an "integral aspect of the process of cognition" (p. 372). Another value, especially for leaders, is that emotions are the means whereby one relates and communicates to oneself and if "we cannot communicate with ourselves we simply cannot communicate with others" (p. 12).

Feelings/emotions are also a more direct apprehension of the experience as compared to thoughts or cognitions. Thoughts are one step removed in that they explain, justify, and put into perspective our experience. In other words, emotions give us a direct access to our experience and the information that makes up that experience. The leader that can tap into his or her emotion in an honest manner will have more energy available to deal with the work at hand (Viscott, 1976).

Hearn (1993) posited that relationships among men are a complex mixture of feeling as the need to balance competition and solidarity are played out. These feelings include joy counterbalanced with fear, sadness and anger. Fear may be experienced as the fear of losing, fear of dominating too much and the subsequent loss of solidarity, fear of being dominated and the fear of loss. The leader that is aware of these feelings, and not afraid of them, will be more effective in balancing out competition and solidarity.

Other complex feelings for men and women emerge when leaders are women. In

this situation traditional ways of acting, consciously and unconsciously, are challenged and can lead to heightened stress and tension in the work environment if those emergent emotions are not handled in an emotionally mature fashion (Hearn, 1993).

There is also the intense experience for leaders when they try to act non-emotional. This act, in itself, is highly emotional and draining of the leader's energy, which could negatively affect job performance. Keeping up a false front is expensive (Hearn, 1993). Similarly, there is difficulty in the management of emotions in supervisory or mentoring experiences, especially when it involves members of the opposite sex. A close relationship of this type may be defined as potentially close or intimate and therefore easily slips into the category of emotional (Hearn, 1993). The leader must be aware of this potential difficulty and be willing to engage his organization about this topic in an open and hopefully proactive manner.

Leaders are involved with managing the emotional labour of others whether they are clients or co-workers. The leader takes on the role of emotional self-control (e.g., the fields of medicine, religion and law and business), which leads to negative health side effects, ranging from increased stress levels, anxiety and abuse of alcohol and drugs (Berry & Pennebaker, 1993; Dixon, 1976; Filene, 1986). Also:

> Men's presence in such organizations symbolizes organization; organization symbolizes power, power over emotions and emotion work. This is clear in men's presence as church leaders, psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers; such organizational masculinities are based on control and management of emotions of others, both 'clients' in emotional or potentially emotional states, and emotional workers such as nurses. (Hearn, 1993, p. 160)

Therefore, from a theoretical point of view, management and leadership may be constructed as emotional work even if the prevailing attitude of these leaders is one of

denial of the emotionality involved in their work. Emotions serve essential relational needs thus enhancing the workings of the organization, ignite creativity and form the foundation for spiritual and moral development, and contribute to the development of community commitment and collective morality (Putnam & Mumby, 1993).

On a negative side, an unemotional person, or rather a person who is disconnected from their feelings or has difficulty with their emotions, can feel alienated from society and is thus more capable of immoral acts (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Bureaucracy uses rationality as its expressive agent and thus invades the private realm of the individuals' emotions and intimacy. "Bureaucracy perpetrated the belief that rationality and the control of emotions are not only inseparable but also necessary for effective organizational life" (p. 41). The knowledgeable leader can counteract this historical institutional tendency.

Typically, emotion is reduced to a form of labour through the separation of mind and body. The individual feels incongruent, alienated from self, and the outside world. This can result in burnout, high job turnover, and cynicism with work (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). According to Waldron and Krone (1991) other effects of bureaucratic control of emotions in the workplace included the constriction of upward information flow, the suppression of disagreements and the diminution of employee voice (e.g., employees less likely to protest against unjust actions or policies). Similarly, norms for emotional control also affect co-worker relationships. Suppression of feelings during interactions with colleagues may result in altered relational perceptions and changed communication patterns (Waldron & Krone, 1991). Sandelands & Buckner (1989) pointed out that in order for a leader to engage the organization in change of motivation,

values, commitment, or pride in the work or product, the leader's work will involve "some aspect of feeling" (p. 119).

By removing emotional states from negative occupational and cultural meanings workers have demonstrated the ability to construct emotions in a positive orientation that includes the sense of freedom, flexibility, and adaptability (Meyerson, 1991). Once the fear of emotions is removed, decision making is easier (Welwood, 1979). Also, emotions can make apparent unresolved issues or situations (Welwood, 1979) which the leader can then address. Put simply, people who are emotionally adept are at an advantage in any domain in life (Goleman, 1995)

Furthermore, Goleman stated that emotions are "indispensable" for rational decision making by pointing us in the right direction and streamlining the potential choices available to the decision making process, which includes both the emotional and rational mind. Emotional competence increases the ability to work with others and increases the effectiveness in leading change (Goleman, 1998).

Emotion and Reason: An Intricate Dance

If one has to deal with emotion it would seem prudent to understand the elements and the relationship between emotion and its opposite - rationality. Within the definition of reason/rationality there is a dichotomy and an inherent weakness that surface. A dichotomy is established between reason and emotion by the exclusion of emotion in the concept of reason and a weakness in the definition is exposed by the circularity of the definition that includes reason to define rationality. Emotion is excluded and reason has been used to establish and maintain power by becoming the only legitimate way of knowing. Even in 'bounded rationality' (Simon, 1976) which acknowledges that

knowing all the variables and information for decision making is impossible, emotion is considered, "nonrational and decisions based on emotions irrational" (p. 469).

An earlier explanation of the relationship between emotion and rationality has been explicated, (absence of emotionality from theory, knowledge formation, and administration and leadership) and a list of reasons for the value of emotion established. The next step is to contextualize emergent concepts extracted from the previously mentioned list of values. For example, the concept of *bounded emotionality* (Mumby & Putnam, 1992) can be used so that a bigger picture can emerge as to the relationship between emotions and effective leadership.

Responsibility to others and interrelatedness are keys to the concept of bounded emotionality. Mumby & Putnam (1992) contended that it is through our emotional ability that people can connect and feel for others and thus make decisions that support the larger community. Information and knowledge gathered through our emotions becomes vital and valued. The dualism between mind and body found in rationalism and bounded rationality is replaced with nurturance and supportiveness, thus merging the conception and execution of work and avoiding fragmented and alienated labour (Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Noddings, 1984).

As emotion as a way of knowing is valued, an atmosphere of care, enhanced work feeling, and increased employee participation becomes possible (Nelson, 1988). This can lead to a community/organization of emotional openness in which members are supported, tolerate criticism, and solve conflicts in a win-win fashion which protects self-esteem. This way of thinking, as postulated above, presupposes a certain amount of emotional ability which has recently been referred to as emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

Salovey and Mayer (1990) envisagd five domains which constitute emotional intelligence. These include: 1) self-awareness of emotion as it happens, 2) the ability to manage/cope/deal with one's emotions (self-regulation), 3) the ability to use emotion constructively (e.g., motivation), 4) the ability to recognize emotion in others (empathy), 5) social competence or managing relationships. Given one wants to improve his or her emotional intelligence, then these domains will have to be addressed.

Self-awareness. The hallmarks of self-awareness are self-confidence, realistic self-assessment and a self-deprecating sense of humour. These attributes arise out of the "the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives as well as their effects on others" (Goleman, 1998, p. 95). In the field of leadership this awareness of the effects of emotion could extend into job performance. How do expressed and unexpressed emotion, one's own and others, affect the quality of the work environment and the subsequent productivity? Borrowing from psychotherapy, in particular experiential approaches, feelings are valued and the goal is not to get rid of them but to become aware of their meaning and to be responsive to "the action tendencies toward which feelings prompt" oneself (Greenberg & Safran, 1989, p. 21). The leader's *feelings* can 'prompt' one to examine values and goals. A leader whose ethics are congruent with their work and behaviour is seen by others to practice what they preach, have the respect of their followers, and find work "energizing" (p.96). Self-awareness is not typically celebrated in western society. However, in the past 25 or 30 years psychotherapy has become prevalent in our culture. The influence of the 'human potential movement' and the public awareness of eastern philosophies and meditative practices such as

Transcendental Meditation (TM) have infiltrated our consciousness. The concept of self-awareness is known in the general public and human potential style workshops permeate the business world. There are resources available to build self-awareness for the principal who is interested.

Self-regulation. Integrity, trustworthiness, ability to cope with ambiguity, and openness to change, stems from the ability to self-regulate. Self-regulation is the ability to "control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods" (Goleman, 1998, p. 95). A good leader has the ability to suspend judgement, to examine his or her feelings and then after thoughtful deliberation, to act. Leaders with the ability to self-regulate are able to "create an environment of trust and fairness" (p. 98) which leads to reduced infighting and improved productivity. Goleman suggested that leaders with the ability to self-regulate are more flexible to the quick changes in the modern world. These leaders are able to integrate new information and take effective action by not panicking. They are able to channel their emotional energy into the demands of the changed situation.

Motivation. Leaders who are impassioned with their work and pursue goals with energy and persistence are motivated. Motivation demonstrates itself through a "strong drive to achieve, optimism even in the face of failure (and) organizational commitment" (Goleman, 1998, p. 95). Furthermore, a motivated leader loves to achieve for the sake of achievement alone. This type of leader is intrinsically motivated and self-generating which, in a leader, can act as a contagion and increase the dedication of the followers.

Empathy. Empathy is often defined as the ability to imagine what another is feeling, to be able to put oneself in another's shoes. Goleman (1998) defined empathy as the "ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people" (p. 95) and the skill to

handle the emotional reactions of others. This definition is more instrumental in nature than the standard dictionary definition which focuses on the comprehension of the other's experience *in toto* rather than the ability of dealing with another's emotional reaction. That being said, Goleman pointed out the further advantages of empathy which include the ability to build and retain talent, cross-cultural sensitivity, and service to clients and customers.

Social skill. According to Goleman (1998), one has social skill if one is effective in leading change, persuasive, and thus able to build and lead teams. Social skill is a proficiency in finding the common ground shared by individuals such that relationships and networks are enhanced. Social skill can be seen as the aggregate of the other aspects of emotional intelligence. Socially skilled leaders are able to determine which tactic will be the most effective for which person; who will respond to the emotional plea and who will respond better to reason. Leaders who only know one way of operating are probably going onto situations without all available resources and will not be as effective as is possible. One of the leader's tasks is to get others to carry out work deemed important. This is accomplished more effectively if the leader has social skill as demonstrated by empathy, motivation, communication, and passion.

Extrapolating from the work of Artz (1994), Forgas (2002), George (2000), Goleman (1998), Salovey and Mayer (1990), and Welwood (1979), any leader, male or female, who has denied the inherent emotionality of their humanness and have not understood the positive value of emotion as a way of knowing is robbing him or herself of a valuable source of information. It is hoped that enough evidence has been presented to demonstrate the value of emotionality for the decision-making processes of leaders.

Whether it is the organizing, interpretive and adaptive value of emotions, or that it is an integral aspect of cognitive functioning, or its communicative function both with oneself and others, or its ability to improve short and long term decision making effectiveness, emotion has value. Also, as previously shown, emotional intelligence contributes to an enhanced work environment through less alienation, an increased sense of community, improved collective morality, and better ethical decision making. If emotionally challenged leaders are able to lose their fear of emotions they can become aware of information that was previously hidden and unusable. In today's world, no leader can afford not to have all available information readily available.

In order to integrate this concept, leaders will have to appreciate the value of emotion in leadership, both intrinsically and instrumentally, in creating a more holistic and effective leader. This kind of leader will have enhanced skills at understanding self and others and be able to create a more effective workplace in which emotions are shared and knowledge drawn out from this valuable untapped source. This leader is not afraid of emotions but conversant with them. This leader, because of his or her enhanced relationship with emotion, understands the possible effects of emotion, personally and on others, while engaged in critical incidents and crisis management and can thus incorporate strategies to counteract negative outcomes.

Crisis Management

A multi-disciplinary approach, as suggested by Pearson and Clair (1998), is used to explore and explicate crisis management definitions, models and processes that educators may find useful. Crisis management (CM) research from the fields of education, psychology, business and management form the foundation of this

exploration. First, a definition of crisis and CM is presented then, a discussion of the process of CM. Next, the process of crisis analysis including the questions of what, when, why, and who will be laid out. This is followed by a measuring-stick for successful outcomes and finally, suggestions for future research and practice.

Definitions

Crisis. The literature is replete with simple and complex definitions of the word crisis and the concept of CM. Fink (1989), coming from a business perspective, relied on Webster's Dictionary for a simple and open-ended definition of the word crisis. A crisis is a "turning point for better or worse," or a "decisive moment" or "crucial time" or "a situation that has reached a critical phase" (p. 15). Fink pointed out that this definition is inherently neither positive nor negative. This is similar to the old Chinese adage about crisis in which the word "crisis" is composed of two characters, one symbolizing *danger* and the other *opportunity*. Crisis management then becomes the planning for this turning point in such a way as to lower both risk and uncertainty while increasing control and re-establishing equilibrium, though not necessarily to the pre-crisis state of affairs.

Dodds and Swiniarski (1994), representing education, defined crisis as:

> Any happening, occurrence or event which can cause public concern and bring damage to the reputation of the ministry (or department) of education, university, community college, school system, school, employee group or individual. (p. 4)

Even though this definition is very specific to education it seems a little limited especially by connecting the concepts of public concern and reputational damage to the organization. Surely a crisis could ensue and not cause damage to reputation. For example, a natural disaster handled appropriately would not cause reputational damage, whereas, a teacher found out to be having an affair with an underage student will cause

some reputational damage no matter how well handled. The definition seems to lean towards CM as damage control.

Pearson and Clair (1998), representing management, provided a fuller definition. They proposed an integrated model combining psychological, socio-political, and technological-structural perspectives.

> An organizational crisis is a low-probability, high-impact situation that is perceived by critical stakeholders to threaten the viability of the organization and that is subjectively experienced by these individuals as personally and socially threatening. Ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution of the organizational crisis will lead to disillusionment or loss of psychic and shared meaning, as well as to the shattering of commonly held beliefs and values and individuals' basic assumptions. During the crisis, decision making is pressed by perceived time constraints and colored by cognitive limitations. (p. 66)

A less academic and more emotional definition (though similar) from the helping profession defines a crisis as:

> A time when we, literally, are not ourselves and the world around us is completely changed. The ordinary methods of coping or intervening are inadequate precisely because the event or situation is completely out of the ordinary in scope and its energy. We know that we are not ourselves when we begin to do things we ordinarily would not do, and we experience emotional reactions and impulses that are not only extraordinary but also frightening. A crisis involves the impression or the conviction that both we and the situation are about to be out of control. (Smiar, 1992, p. 149)

Or, as Habermas (1975) said, "the crisis cannot be separated from the viewpoint of the one who is undergoing it" (p. 58).

Crisis intervention from a mediational perspective becomes the "immediate, timely, and skilful intrusion into a person's life" (Greenstone & Leviton, 1987, p. 40). This concept can easily be adapted for the organization by replacing the word people with organization, such that:

> Crisis intervention is the immediate, timely, and skillful intrusion into the organization's life at a time when the stress the organization may be experiencing is too great to be handled and managed through usual coping mechanisms. Intervention intends to defuse the potentially destructive effects of the unusual stress and return the organization in crisis to levels of precrisis functioning. (Greenstone & Leviton, 1987, p. 40)

Crisis management (CM). Crisis management definitions typically are addendums to the definition of the word "crisis" and explanations of the elements that constitute CM. From management (Quarantelli, 1988) and educational (Siegel, 1991) perspectives there is the belief that decisions must be made swiftly. From education there is the distinction between catastrophic and non-catastrophic events. Non-catastrophic events are considered internal and not damaging on the educational institution's reputation. Again, the emphasis in CM in education is summarized by the italicized statement of Dodds and Swiniarski (1994); "In a time of crisis, will our publics believe us or will they believe those who are reporting the crisis?" (p. 6).

From psychology comes the idea that crises present bad problems (Stubbart, 1987) that are highly emotional and uncertain. Also, during times of crisis, people's abilities to process information are eroded. This leads to the crisis spiraling "out of control because executives, managers, or operators, have responded irrationally and enacted errors in bias and other shortcomings in their information processing and decision making" (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 62).

With an integrated analysis, CM is defined by Pearson and Clair (1998) as follows:

> Effective crisis management involves minimizing potential risk before a triggering event. In response to a triggering event, effective crisis management involves improvising and interacting by key stakeholders so that individual and collective sense making, shared meaning, and roles are reconstructed. Following a triggering event, effective crisis management

> entails individual and organizational readjustment of basic assumptions, as well as behavioral and emotional responses aimed at recovery and readjustment. (p. 66)

Crisis Management: A process. The ability to determine what constitutes a crisis is an important factor in crisis management. Gilliam (1993) stated that this is indeed the first step and occurs in the "precrisis" stage. Stubbing one's toe may be painful but it is not a crisis. A student cutting of their hand in the shop in front of other students is a crisis on several fronts. Before examining the process that occurs in the managing of a crisis a few examples of crisis situations are provided. A list of potential crises is provided in Appendix A. Some examples for education include, natural disasters (hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, fire), explosion, major vandalism, bus wreck, building collapse, kidnapping, bomb threat, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, racial discrimination, youth gangs (stabbing, shooting, intimidation), fatal accident on property, down-sizing, food poisoning, and strikes to name a few.

Janis (1989) suggested that the biases, beliefs, philosophy and or ideological stereotypes of the CEO are critical in determining how an organization responds to a crisis. Smiar (1992) stated that many CEO's are unprepared to handle crisis and most companies do not have crisis policies in place (Fink, 1986). If the CEO feels that crisis management is not important a ripple effect will take place throughout the organization in which executive perceptions about risk or lack thereof will permeate the organizational culture. If a lackadaisical attitude concerning crisis management permeates the organization then the chances for mismanagement of a disaster increase. The CEO must be conscious and committed to the concept of CM for it to work (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992).

Assuming that the CEO believes in CM, the next step is to assemble a team then create a plan. Most superintendents and principles tend to manage crises by themselves even though almost all of the literature suggested a team approach (Ziolkowski & Willower, 1991). Somehow, a leader must integrate the concept of strong leadership, as suggested by Janis (1989), with the team approach and disbursement of power and authority to key players. Finally, agreeing on a definition of what constitutes a crisis is key, for if "everyone agrees on a definition, then everyone will know when to invoke the plan" (Smiar, 1992, p. 149).

Stages of a crisis. Fink (1986) described four stages in the process of a crisis. The first is the prodromal stage, then the acute stage, then the chronic stage and finally the resolution stage. The prodromal stage is a warning stage. At this stage with proper management and awareness many crises can be dealt with before ever reaching the acute stage. Gilliam (1993) pointed out that preventative planning is the key to effective crisis management. If warnings are ignored, the transition from prodromal to acute can occur with a shocking swiftness. CM then becomes an after the fact exercise of damage control. When the acute stage is upon the organization some damage is inevitable. The question becomes how much? As Fink (1986) stated, "the key is to control as much of the crisis as you can. If you can't control the actual crisis, see if you can exert some degree of influence over where, how, and when the crisis erupts" (pp. 22-23). Typically the acute stage is the shortest in duration but the strongest in intensity and therefore feels like the longest. The chronic stage or clean-up stage is where post-mortems occur. This is also the period where reorganization and healing can occur for individuals and the organization. It is at this time that the lessons learned from the crisis experience can be

integrated within company policy and procedures to be more effective for the next crisis. The crisis resolution stage is the goal for the organization. This is where the organization achieves new health and vigour. Fink advised caution as historically crises evolve in a cyclical fashion and an organization often deals with more than one crisis at a time (p. 25).

Crisis Analysis

The prodromal or pre-crisis stage is the best time to analyze any potential or real upcoming events. The need for speed at this point is minimal and thoughtful plans can be created and pre-emptive plans integrated into the operations of the organization. Mitroff and (1993) suggested four fundamental questions need to be answered. One, what is the crisis? Two, when did it begin? Three, why has it occurred (what are its multiple causes)? And four, who is affected? These four questions are intended to provide a logical and orderly process in treating a crisis.

What is the crisis? It must be remembered that when determining what is the crisis there will always be a lack of sufficient information. This is one of the elements of crisis prediction and management that makes a crisis difficult. Fink (1986) suggested that there are two important reasons to clearly identify the crisis. First, it is only by identifying the crisis that it can be managed. Second, once the crisis has been identified, then it can be examined to see whether any and how much influence can be exerted over the outcome.

In trying to determine what constitutes a crisis, the following elements should be considered:

> What . . . is the nature of the event; how many and how quickly people need to be helped, informed, or both; who and how many need

> interpretation of the events; how accessible those people are; how much interaction with the media is necessary; what the media chooses to emphasize; who and how many people need emergency care; how much the institution needs to assert control and demonstrate that it is capable of responding; and how quickly the institution needs to respond. (Siegel, 1991, p. 14)

Once the crisis has been identified a best case and worse case scenario, at a minimum, should be extrapolated. Under a worse case scenario the organization would look at whether the crisis was deliberate, internal origin or external, brought about by action or inaction, and if previous organizational decisions led to the current crisis.

Under best case scenarios, the assumption is that the company is innocent. Was the crisis caused or fabricated by others? Do we respond and how do we respond if the organization is clearly not part of the crisis? Fink (1986), with his usual alacrity, summed it up well when he said that there are "crises in which you are the victim, and there are those in which you are the culprit" (p. 39).

When did the crisis begin? Was there early warning signals and how did the organization respond? The issue of when becomes extremely important because the media and the courts will want answers to such questions as: "When did you know you had a problem? What did you do about it? If you didn't know you had a problem, why didn't you? If you knew you had a problem but didn't do anything about it, why didn't you" (Mitroff & Pearson, 1993, p. 7)?

Why has the crisis occurred? Some writers in crisis analysis and management (Fink, 1986) think that the why is not important until the organization has dealt with the acute crisis stage. However, learning the why could in some situations lead to an answer of the current crisis. Mitroff and Pearson (1993) stated that crises result from a simultaneous breakdown in the interactions between the organizations technology, people

and systems. Also, up to 80 per cent off all breakdowns are due to human and organizational error, not mechanical problems. Finally, it is important to examine the culture of the organization to see what or how it may have contributed to the crisis. Is the cultural proactive or reactive in its maintenance programs, policies, procedures and mental orientations towards managing?

Who is affected by the crisis? Who is a people question that has a number of ramifications. Who will be on the crisis team? Who is directly involved in the crisis? Who detected the crisis or ought to have detected the crisis? Who are the stakeholders in the crisis is one of the first questions to be asked so that any action will take the identified stakeholders into consideration. Any mistake at this point could be disastrous. A typical example: not acknowledging that the public is a stakeholder in an industrial accident and thereby not providing them with enough details to protect themselves. This could lead to major damage to the company's reputation and lawsuits. Not only must all the stakeholders be identified but stakeholder perceptions must be known and interactions between stakeholders predicted. This will enhance the organization's ability to "contain the crisis, to resume business, and to learn from the crisis" (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 71).

Positive Outcomes of a Crisis

When we analyze our organization after a crisis, what yardstick can we compare it to in order to measure successful or positive outcomes? Pearson and Clair (1998) defined seven "crisis concerns" and the resulting positive outcomes that can be used in such a process. These include:

1) Signal detection - early detection and appropriate responses;
2) Incident containment- major impact totally contained within the organization;
3) Business resumption - business is maintained as usual during and after the crisis with no loss of product or service;
4) Effects on learning - policies and procedures are changed as a result of the crisis;
5) Effects on reputation - organization's image is improved by effective management of the crisis;
6) Resource availability - internal and external stakeholder's resources are readily available;
7) Decision making - ample evidence of timely, accurate decisions grounded in facts. (p. 68)

Likewise, the opposite outcomes would be reflective of failures. Typically organizations have a mix of successes and failures when handling a crisis situation and often fall into what Pearson and Clair (1998) called midground outcomes.

Smiar (1992), Gilliam (1993), and Fink (1986) found that rehearsal and crisis preparation are intrinsic to positive outcomes. Companies that have crisis plans in place handle the chronic phase of emergencies in approximately one half the time as those companies without plans (Fink, 1986). Thinking about what could happen and practicing helps the participants in many ways. It helps to create an awareness of possible problem areas. It shows that the executives consider crisis management important. It helps promote a sense of confidence and assurance that can be invaluable when a crisis strikes. The organization will have a plan to use or modify when a crisis appears and this will save valuable time. Lines of communication within the organization and media contacts will already be in place. Crisis management teams (CMT) by their very nature help create organizational learning processes. Lastly, yet most importantly, the CMT provides "a centralized power structure that can make and implement decisions rapidly in the midst of a crisis" (Mitroff & Pearson, 1993).

Now that an explication of crisis, crisis management, and crisis analysis have been explored, an examination of the effects of a critical incident (CI) on the school community and the most effective way for the principal to interact in managing a CI will be conducted

The Principal and the Art of Managing Critical Incidents

Sooner or later a critical incident (CI) will occur during the school year. It is as inevitable as the seasons changing. As Juhnke (1997) reported, children and adolescents are increasingly victims of violence with homicide the third leading cause of death for elementary and middle school children in the United States. A car accident, a suicide, or a devastating injury to an athlete, are all CIs which every principal will most likely encounter sometime in their career. How he or she manages the event and the effects on the children, staff, and the principal are critical to the well-being of the school and the community at large.

To gain an understanding of the mechanisms that comprise a CI, the management of a CI, and the resultant effects on the participants, a number of psychological stress related constructs such as: stress, burnout, vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue, critical incident, critical incident stress (CIS), critical incident stress debriefing (CISD), and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are examined. These constructs comprise the base for the field of psychotraumatology. Furthermore, some personal responses to CIS, the managing of CIs in the school, pre-incident planning, elements of a plan, administrative pressures, and issues for the principal including grief and bereavement are explored.

Stress

Any CI by its very nature is a stressful and people may have 'normal' or pathological responses. An extreme pathologic response would be post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). If stress is conceptualized as a nonspecific response of the body to any demand (Selye, 1976) then stress is an everyday event and our response to it helps maintain homeostasis. Selye also postulated two types of stress: the good stress he called *eustress* and the bad, *distress*. Selye (1980) saw stress as a general adaptation syndrome comprising three phases: alarm, resistance and exhaustion.

CIs frequently invoke extreme levels of stress that the average person is not used to, which leads to predictable stress reactions (discussed later). In a simple psychological definition, stress is simply an unfavourable person-environment relationship (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, cited in Brown & O'Brian, 1998). A key element in this definition is the negative appraisal of the situation by the appraiser (Romano, 1988). It should, however, be noted that what is one person's distress is another's excitement.

Burnout

Burnout is the result of long term ongoing stress (Takooshian, 1994, cited in Brown & O'Brian, 1998). Some of the sequlae of Burnout are similar to the symptoms displayed by normal stress reactions to a CI. These include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of diminished personal accomplishment. However, Burnout is not to be confused with PTSD or vicarious traumatization.

Vicarious Traumatization/ Secondary Traumatization/ Compassion Fatigue

Principals need to be on guard for teacher Burnout from the regular rigours of the profession. Likewise, principals must be attuned to the potential of their counsellors and

nurses and possibly teachers suffering from Vicarious Trauma after hearing many difficult and unsettling stories from children under their care. Vicarious traumatization is defined as:

> A phenomenon that recognizes the exposure of persons, other than the victim, to the specifics of the trauma material or the reenactment of traumatic experiences transmits the emotionally laden aspects of the original violence and thus is a source of emotional arousal and distress. (Hartman, 1995, p.175)

Vicarious trauma, like burnout, occurs over time, whereas, CI stress occurs within a much shorter time frame.

Critical Incident (CI)

A CI or traumatic event, which is often used synonymously, is defined by Figley (1985) as, "an extraordinary event or series of events which is sudden, overwhelming, and often dangerous, either to one's self or significant others" (p. xvii). It would be safe to extrapolate, under the concept of *in loco parentis,* that "significant others" include the children under the teacher's and principal's care.

Mitchell (1983) defined a critical incident as "any situation faced by emergency service personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions that have a potential to interfere with their abilities to function either on the scene or later" (p. 36). Even though this definition was created for emergency service personnel, teachers and principals are often the first responders to a CI in the school and are therefore subject to the same conditions as emergency responders. Walker (1990) states that "A critical incident can be a recognized disaster, such as an airplane crash, or a hotel fire; an act of nature, such as an earthquake or tornado; or any event involving death, injury, destruction, and disruption" (p. 121). Most of these events are within the realm of

possibility for the principal to have to manage at some point in his or her career. Walker further stated that critical incidents are:

> Individually significant events involving death or serious injury and necessitating rescue or emergency care; or other crisis situations that energize unusually strong emotions. Critical incident participants respond with predictable systemic stress reactions, involving normal pathological grief patterns, and may develop posttraumatic stress disorder. (p. 121)

Simply put, a CI is some event resulting in human suffering beyond the normal range. The characteristics of a CI include the suddenness and unexpected aspect, the disruption of one's sense of control, the questioning of one's values, beliefs, understanding of how the world works (Mitchell, 1983, Ragaisis, 1994), and loss of the illusion of invulnerability (Walker, 1990).

Critical Incident Stress

When involved in a CI the individual may not suffer any stress related symptoms or they may suffer from a range of symptoms that have been defined as "normal" and within the range of non-pathologic reactions. These symptoms include "intense intrusive recollections, numbing, denial, feelings of unreality and arousal" (Friedman, 1996, p. 180). With adequate social support (Jenkins, 1996; Joseph, Williams, & Yule, 1992; Lane, 1993-4; Nixon, Schorr, Boudreux, & Vincent, 1999; Viney, 1996) and or some form of critical incident stress intervention these symptoms are short lasting. If these symptoms and others persist the person may be suffering from the effect of some sort of pathologic post-traumatic stress and possibly post traumatic stress disorder.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is one of several potential pathologic reactions that can occur when an individual is exposed to a CI or trauma. The public perception of PTSD is usually

associated with the effects of war and commonly called "shell shock." However, PTSD can occur after any event that is regarded by the victim as either life threatening or extremely emotionally disturbing (e.g., handling the bodies of a disaster, such as a bomb blast, aircraft crash or natural disaster, rape, war, car accident, bank robbery, shooting). Furthermore, the repercussions of PTSD are not limited to adults. The school principal and administrators must remember that PTSD can occur at any age, including childhood (American Psychological Association, 1994).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 4th edition (DSM-IV) (1994) criteria for PTSD form the basis of the following summation. The patient must have been exposed to a traumatic event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury to oneself or to others and had a strong emotional response such as intense fear or helplessness. Secondly, (at least one of the following) the event is persistently re-experienced either through images, thoughts, perception or recurring dreams, or feelings that the actual event is recurring, or acute psychological or physiologic distress to internal or external reminders of the event. Thirdly, the patient experiences (at least 3 of the following) avoidance of thoughts, feelings, or conversations related to the trauma, avoidance of activities that remind the patient of the trauma, inability to recall the trauma, lack of interest in life, feelings of detachment, restricted range of affect and a lack of interest in the future. Fourth, (at least two of the following) sleep problems, irritability or outbursts of anger; difficulty concentrating, hypervigilance and exaggerated startle response are present. Finally, what makes PTSD different than a non-pathological reaction is that the symptoms listed above must last for at least a month and cause significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.

PTSD reactions can start immediately at the scene of the event (though diagnosis would not occur until one month after onset of symptoms – defined as acute stress disorder within first month) or it can be delayed, striking months or even years later. Intrusive thoughts and recollections "can persist for over 50 years" (Schnurr, 1992, cited in Friedman, 1996, p.176). Clearly, this is a disorder with devastating and far-reaching effects on the individual.

Personal responses to Critical Incident Stress (CIS). How will teachers, students and administration act when confronted with a CI? Prediction of individual responses is difficult but experience has shown that a range of responses can be expected. It must also be remembered that in the all too common shootings on school property, ". . . no one who deals with a serial, spree, or mass murder is untouched by it" (Sewell, 1993, p. 104). Linton (1995) also pointed out that even emergency responders are not trained in coping with their own emotional response when confronted with a critical incident. Brandt, Fullerton, Saltzberger, Ursano and Holloway (1995) identified three characteristic responses of caregivers. They are identification, sense of helplessness and inadequacy.

Identification. In identification, the teacher or administrator identifies with the children because they may have children too. This closeness to the victims hits home and feelings of survivor guilt can occur, past memories can be invoked, and an overwhelming pain of the loss can be experienced. The following examples are quotes taken after the Ramstein Air Force Base disaster:

> The most stressful part for me was seeing a child tangled in barbed wire who had at least second degree burns over 95% of his body. I thought of my own daughter, my nieces, nephews and all the children I know and love. I was thinking that child could be one of them.

> Seeing children injured was very stressful for me because I lost my son over a year ago.
>
> When the family came . . . there was nothing I could do to ease the pain. The look on their faces made me want to cry. (Brandt et al, 1995, p. 91)

Sense of helplessness and inadequacy. The following are examples to illustrate the sense of helplessness and inadequacy that afflicts people when they encounter overwhelming circumstances. These examples are also from the Ramstein disaster:

> I felt so incapacitated and helpless. . . . They were scared, tired and sad, and I had to tell them more bad news.
>
> I felt inadequate and confused and wanted to do really important things, yet I didn't know what they were.
>
> I didn't feel deserving of anything because I couldn't really fix anything or stop the pain. I felt very inadequate and helpless and angry. (Brandt et al, 1995, p. 91)

These quotes give a sense of the intensity of the experience and the difficulty people have when confronted with an experience beyond the norm.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

CISD is post trauma intervention with an established or formal group used for the mitigation of post trauma stress. The reduction of tension and anxiety and the restoration the person's precrisis level of functioning is the minimal goal with an increase of functioning above precrisis levels the ideal (Van Den Bergh, 1992; Wollman, 1993). Hollister (1996) reiterates three goals of CISD: 1) the lessening of the impact of the stressful event, 2) the acceleration of recovery, and 3) the return of employees to their jobs. Mitchell (1988) specifically included the reduction of the likelihood of PTSD through the use of CISD.

The process of critical incident stress debriefing was originally developed by

Jeffrey T. Mitchell (1983; 1988; Mitchell & Everly, 2001) for use with emergency care responders. Since 1983 its use has been adopted as a primary intervention of choice for police, the military, disaster relief agencies (e.g., Red Cross) (Welzant, Torpey, Kay and Sienkilski, 1995) hospital workers (Matthews, 1998), the FBI (Jensma, 1999) and within the education system (Wollman, 1993) when managing CIs. This does not mean that all schools, hospitals and police forces use this or any other intervention system, but CISD teams are used more and more frequently by mental health providers, EAPs (McWhirter & Linzer, 1994), missionaries (Jensma, 1999) and urban school systems. Over 400 formally trained teams are operating in Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States (Jensma, 1999).

Purpose of CISD

The purpose of CISD is to mitigate the effects of stress in an unusual and impactful incident or trauma situation and identify people who may be responding in a pathological manner so that they can be referred for further support. This is accomplished by a group debriefing process. CISD is not psychotherapy (Everly, 1995); it is a psycho-educational process (Ragaisis, 1994) that allows for the normalization of stress symptoms through examining the trauma event, examining thoughts and feelings, and integrating the experience and providing closure. Mitchell, (1983) identified and categorized this process into seven specific stages.

Introduction phase. In this phase team members introduce themselves and give an overview of the debriefing process. Part of the team's function at this time is to increase establish rapport, increase participant motivation, respond to concerns, and discuss issues of confidentiality.

Fact phase. In this phase the basic facts of the event and each individual's role is elicited. This phase is conceptualized as a cognitive process. What are the facts as the participants remember them.

Thought phase. This phase is a transition phase from the facts to the thoughts about the event. In other words, what thoughts are the participants having about the event and their role in the event?

Reaction phase. This is the affective phase in which participants typically express "highly charged emotions" (Everly, 1995, p. 282). Participants share only if they choose to.

Symptom phase. This is a transition phase in which the participants move away from their emotional experience to focusing on their symptoms. The move into the cognitive domain allows for stabilization and further exploration and clarification of symptoms. This is typically a time when participants are relieved to discover that others have symptoms similar to their own. Normal responses cited by McWhirter and Linzer (1994) include "tearfulness, shakiness, nightmares, insomnia, irritability, isolation, hypervigilance, panic, headache, and gastrointestinal upset" (p. 404). Typical emotional reactions include fear anger and apathy.

Teaching phase. In this phase the facilitators reinforce the concept that stress reactions are normal not abnormal responses to a traumatic event. At this point, information is presented about crisis coping, stress management and signs of pathological symptoms.

Reentry phase. In this phase constructive coping mechanisms are reinforced, final questions are answered and a psychological closure of the event is initiated and

possibly completed. Information handouts are then distributed.

These steps help the individual "gain intellectual understanding of the relationship between the crisis and the current discomfort of disequilibrium," facilitate "ventilation of feelings to reduce immediate anxiety," explore " alternate ways of coping," and encourage "emotional support" from participants, friends and family (Wollman, 1993, p.73). This support from others is considered one of the most important factors in mitigating the onset of pathologic stress reactions (Maggio & Terenzi, 1993). Vernacchia, Reardon and Templin (1997), in their study of the deaths of athletes in schools, recommended a phase which he called "Follow-up Services." This stage includes telephone contact, informal contact, and fulfilling requests for referrals for treatment whether student initiated or staff initiated.

CISD creates a peer support group/process whereby stress is mediated by listening, understanding, and expressing thoughts and feelings within a supportive environment. Through this process stress is reduced, pathological stress reactions are minimized and a return to pre-crisis level of functioning is hastened (Van Den Berg, 1992). Finally, CISD "superimposes structure, information, and support on the chaos of the trauma" (Everly, 1995, p. 286).

Composition. Ideally, the debriefing is conducted by trained male and female debriefers who are mental health professionals. Also, there should be someone affiliated with the target organization on the team. Having a debriefer, who is part of the organization, though not directly involved in the trauma event, allows for quicker acceptance by the group of the information presented. There is still a stigma attached to any process that smacks of therapy. CISD is seen as most effective when conducted

within 24-72 hours post event (Mitchell, 1983; Everly, 1995). The principles of crisis intervention suggest that "intervention should be early, brief, problem-focused, and conducted relatively close to the site of the trauma" (Linton, p. 569).

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

CISM is defined as a "comprehensive approach to stress management" (Everly and Mitchell, 1992, cited in Welzant et al., 1995, p. 177). A more complete definition was offered by the same authors in 1997 when they stated that CISM was an integrated and multifactorial multicomponent process for crisis response which encompasses pre-crisis preparation through post-crisis intervention, and follow-up (Everly and Mitchell, 1997). CISM includes but is not limited to "education, defusing (a more rapid and shorter meeting than debriefing), formal debriefing, demobilizations (for large scale operations), on scene support services, follow-up services and referral, individual consultations, peer counseling" (Welzant et al., p. 177).

Reasons for having a CISM system include: offsetting the high cost of health care in the school or organization, loss of job performance associated with a CI, and the demonstration to the employees that the organization cares about their future welfare (McWhirter and Linzer, 1994; Jensma, 1999). Further costs to the organization can be incurred when staff is fearful of returning to work. Typically, organizations note that in the aftermath of a CI there are: "increases in absenteeism, employee stress, and emotional turmoil; increases in worker's compensation claims and health care utilization; and reduction in job performance" (Hillenberg & Wolf, 1988; cited in McWhirter & Linzer, 1994, p. 404). Another reason to incorporate CISM is to allow for the analysis of the CI, establishing of media management protocols, and networking with emergency responders

and disaster relief agencies.

Managing CIs in the School

Houghton (1996) defined a CI for schools and children as:

> A sudden, unexpected event that is distressing to pupils and/or staff. It may involve violence against members of the school, a serious accident or the sudden death of a child or teacher (all the more traumatic if witnessed by others), or it could be that the school is subjected to major vandalism such as an arson attack.
> (p. 59)

As Oates (1988) stated, "The question is no longer 'if' there will be a death that impacts a school campus, the question is 'when' " (p. 83). The principal needs to be ready. Pre-incident planning is stressed as an absolute must for any crisis intervention whether in the literature on organizational management or the mental health literature on CIs. If there is a CISD team in place, the principal would not be directly involved in leading the interventions. However, the team is in and out in a matter of days after an incident and the principal will often have to manage the media, the teachers and the parents as well as oversee the handling of the children by the teachers. The principal needs to be aware of the ongoing effects of a critical incident and the differential manner in which it may affect his or her charges.

Symptoms. Typical symptoms after experiencing a CI include: memory problems, diminished decision-making capacity, increased anger, guilt, irritability and depression as well as physical problems such as dizziness, headaches and fatigue (Spitzer & Burke, 1993). How individuals interpret a CI is intrinsic to their coping mechanisms. "Cognitive and emotional development, coping styles and locus of control, attribution and temperament" (Houghton, 1996, p. 60) are all factors to be considered in managing the students post crisis response. There is also the developmental stage of the children

involved to be considered.

Risk factors. There are some people who are at particular risk, both children and adults. Houghton (1996) pointed out children with special needs suffer more negative side effects. There is a correlation between poor academic performance and PTSD symptoms and high academic achievement seems to be a protective factor. There does not appear to be any gender differences other than girls are more willing to talk about their experience. Recovery is also related to past traumatic events. In other words, the amount of previous trauma typically is correlated with negative outcomes. However, if past losses have been successfully negotiated, recovery is more likely. CIs tend to re-stimulate previous trauma and this is most evident with those that have been abused physically or sexually. This population is at greater risk to develop PTSD. Children with strong social supports are at less risk. Therefore, children with limited support, attachment problems, previous trauma experiences or abuse are most vulnerable. The wise (prepared) principal and the school will know who these children are.

Pre-Incident Planning

When a CI occurs, it is imperative that the school maintains a sense of solidarity and continuity for children during the crisis. As Dyregrov (1993; cited in Houghton, 1996) stated, "When a traumatic event directly strikes a school, it is important that the school continues as a supportive and stable part of the students [*sic*] environment" (p. 61). This is not always easy. When a CI occurs the resulting stress tends to expose any dysfunctionality within the system. This can lead to "impaired judgement by managers" (Houghton, 1996, p.61). Once again, it becomes apparent that planning is essential. Schools without a plan tend to add to the chaos rather than mitigating it (Oates, 1988).

Part of the pre-incident planning involves co-opting the community to be part of the process. The concept here is to proactively bolster the family community "rather than replacing them" (Houghton, 1996, p. 62). This idea becomes more important as the scale of the CI increases, for, the larger the disaster the more the need for a "corporate response" (Oates, 1988, p. 84). Major CIs can affect the whole community and the principal needs to anticipate what this means to his or her school. The school often becomes a focal point for disaster relief operations. The principal may find him or herself liaising with disaster relief organizations and dealing with extensive media coverage as well as managing the total school environment (i.e., facilities, teachers, staff, students, parents and upper management).

The creation or engagement of the services of a CISD Team is critical. If school personnel make up all or part of the CISD team, they too will need debriefing after the event. It is best if their debriefing is handled by professionals not involved with the critical incident (Talbot, Manton and Dunn, 1992). Not to be forgotten is providing information in a timely and appropriate manner to parents about the incident and how to support their children (Juhnke, 1997; West, Mercer & Altheimer, 1993). The school that has a positive nurturing and responsive environment can lessen the negative effects of a CI (Kimchi & Schaffner, 1990; cited in Houghton, 1996).

Inoculation training. Part of pre-incident planning involves setting up a steering group or committee that will go into action once a CI occurs. They will assess the situation, coordinate and oversee the process. Pre-incident education for teachers, staff and children has been identified as valuable. This has been described by Maggio and Terenzi (1993) as *inoculation training*. To be effective the training should begin when

new staff and students join the school or, if this is not practical, at regular intervals (once or twice a year). These sessions indicate to staff that administration recognizes the effects of cumulative and CI stress and that stress reactions are normal and not to be hidden away. "Inoculation training provides an organization with a common structure for understanding the dynamics of stress and a common vocabulary to facilitate dialogue at all levels of the organization" (p. 12).

A proactive school would determine how the events and experience of a CI be best integrated into the school curriculum (Yule & Cantebury, 1994; cited in Houghton, 1996). A proactive pre-crisis suggestion by Yule and Cantebury was that children should be exposed to information about death before a critical incident and not after the fact. Even though the organizational literature and CI literature focus on the need for pre-incident planning, the reality is rather depressing. In the United Kingdom, even though 66 percent of educational psychology services (EPS) have had to respond to a crisis from 1993 to 1996, "only 10 per cent have a planned response and only half of these have detailed support for the psychologists" (Houghton, 1996, p. 67).

Creating a plan. As was pointed out in the section on crisis, having a plan before disaster strikes is critical for effective management and reduction of negative outcomes. This holds true for the school and the principal just as it would for any organization. An effective plan should consider three aspects: prevention, intervention and postvention.

Prevention includes having a plan, having people to execute the plan, training the people, setting up peer counselling programs, having curriculum units on death and grieving processes and a contact with or setting up a CISD team.

Intervention is the application of the plan making allowances for unique

situations. Remember, no mater how detailed the plan, no amount of preparation can adequately prepare the individual for the sights, sounds and smells of a CI. The principal ideally will have set up a personal support system to help deal with the unpredictable emotional responses that may occur.

Postvention is the time where ongoing monitoring of the effects of the CI takes place. CISD teams are deployed, those that are of high risk can be assessed for more serious stress responses, feedback from teachers elicited as to the progress and mood of the students, meeting parent groups if needed, and analysis of the effectiveness of the school's response to the CI. Not to be forgotten are the needs of the teachers, staff and administration. Komar (1994, citing Lamb and Maxim, 1987) suggested three principles to guide postvention policies and procedures. These are: "1) nothing should be done to glamorize the death, 2) doing nothing can be as dangerous as doing too much and 3) the students cannot be helped until the faculty is helped" (p. 248). Komar then outlined some specific procedures to follow. These are: 1) provide accurate information to the entire school staff, 2) introduce the postvention team to the faculty body, 3) follow normal school schedule, 4) specify the locations for assessing high-risk youths and 5) at the end of the school day, debrief staff (p. 37) [a questionnaire that addresses some of the practical issues in the school when coping with a CI as well as a sample action plan by Oates (1988) is presented in Appendix B. An action plan to aid in administrative recovery by Maggio and Terenzi (1993) is provided in Appendix C].

Administrative Pressure

Sewell (1991) felt that the stress of a critical incident "requires a strong organizational commitment, specific management programs involving training and

critical incident stress debriefing, and community support" (p. 103). As in previous examples, the research in CI is mostly done for emergency responders and law enforcement and the extrapolated findings from these sources suggest that these findings may hold true for school principals/administrators and teachers.

Administrative pressures include managing the CI in such as fashion as not to engender negative publicity, the concept of carrying on with the job, the stress of working with upper management (e.g., principal to director, school board) and "conflicts within both role and responsibility" (Sewell, 1991, p. 104). For example, the principal's role is to project a strong and compassionate visage, however this may conflict heavily with the inner experience. There could also be conflict between establishing or maintaining who is in charge. Is the principal's role being usurped by administrative figures higher up or is there conflict with emergency responders taking over jurisdiction (e.g., police, military)?

If it does not already exist, one of the tasks the principal needs to engage in prior to a CI is to extract an organizational commitment of support for a CI plan. This would include training, a CISD system, organizational support systems and community support. Administrative support would include directives or orders that define the organization's response to a CI. This would include "procedures, coordination with other agencies, record keeping and psychological support for responding and assigned personnel" (Sewell, 1991, p. 113). Identification of psychologists, counsellors and grief support persons before the CI is suggested. Contemplating and arranging this sort of support can be a pressure in and of itself.

The Principal

Kess and Lashwood (1996) pointed out that school personnel are, for the most part, absent in the literature base on stress syndromes. There are some articles that deal with general stress and stress/time management studies of principals (see Bailey, Fillos, & Kelly, 1987; Roberson & Matthews, 1988; Tanner, Schnittjer & Atkins, 1991). However, after an exhaustive survey of the literature on CIs, especially in journal articles, the principals' experience is unrepresented.

The principal is subject to all of the effects described above as well as the additional stress of being in charge. Sloan, Rozensky, Kaplan and Saunders (1994) discussed psychological factors that could be applied to the school principal when managing a CI. As mentioned previously, *traumatic stimuli* such as seeing the victim(s) increase stress. *Adverse work environment* is also mentioned. This could include damage to the school property by fire, bomb blast, flood or wind. Other factors affecting the work environment are media personnel, untrained volunteers and noise level. There are *time pressures* which may affect the principal. Along with time pressure are *quantitative work load* (actual amount of work) and the *qualitative work load* (the subjective ease or difficulty in accomplishing tasks).

Sloan et al. (1994), in their study of a shooting incident at a school, found that a qualitatively heavy work load was related to intrusive thoughts and avoidant behaviour. Time pressure and quantitatively heavy work load was related to avoidance of incident stimuli. Even though the subjects were health care workers and emergency responders these findings could be considered applicable to the school administrator.

The school principal, it might be assumed, has both high levels of quantitative and

qualitative work loads as well as time pressures during a CI. If this is so, these areas become focal points for debriefing interventions for the principal. Principals need to go through their own grieving process and yet this can be easily waylaid if there is a preoccupation with responsibility to others. Preoccupation with responsibility can inhibit mourning (Black, 1993, cited in O'Hara, Taylor, & Simpson, 1994). Principals have a major juggling act in managing all the tasks during a CI and, if they are anything like the managers in Lane's (1993, 1994) CI description, they will not schedule in their own debriefing.

Walker (1990) explicated the qualities of emergency care personnel and these same traits might be advantageous for the school principal to ameliorate the effects of CISM. They included, "commitment to important values, a sense of personal control, capability and understanding of personal limitation, perception of crisis as a challenge, and courage and caution" (p. 122).

With these qualities in mind, the principal needs to be aware of, and be prepared for, the effects of CI on the school and personally. The principal/leader can educate him or herself through reading or taking a course on critical incident stress debriefing (CISD), critical incident stress management (CISM) and crisis management (CM). In the area of crisis management, Richardson (1993) proposed six attributes that the crisis manager needs to have in order to mitigate the negative effects of a crisis. These attributes are:

1. *Awareness and Proactivity.* Assume crisis will occur eventually and have a plan.

2. *Knowledge of and Familiarity with Helpful Concepts.* Have knowledge of theory. Know what the latest information is in the field.

3. *Left and Right-brained Thinking Capability.* The ability for systematic analysis and holistic, creative, and imaginative approaches to planning and

enactment when crises occur.

4. *Empathic, Communicative and Group Decision-Making Qualities.* The ability to work with and value many points of view. The ability to communicate clearly what needs to be done and promote support within the organization and outside.

5. *Ethically Confident.* A well reasoned, thought out, and tested set of moral and ethical beliefs will guide the decision making process when ethical conflicts arise under extreme conditions.

6. *Emotional strength.* The effective crisis manager understands that crises are not rational nor are the responses of those affected. Crises are unexpected and highly emotional events. The crisis manager had better understand their own emotional capability as well as those around him or her. (p. 139)

Little or no research has been done on the principal's stress levels while managing a critical incident. Inferences have to be made from previous work carried out on emergency responders and health care providers. It is assumed that due to the heavy work load, both qualitative and quantitative, feelings of responsibility, and any personal connections the principal has to the deceased, stress levels would be high. Protective and ameliorating factors include education, preparation, and self-care. When these elements are bound with personal attitudes and beliefs that support self-awareness, sense of effectiveness, responsibility, ethics and a willingness to lead; this leads to a healthy, resilient, and prepared principal.

Grief and Bereavement

Another important area to consider is death and bereavement. Though part of this is covered in CISM, the knowledge of the process of grieving is invaluable for a principal's understanding of their own grief reactions and those within the school and the community at large. As Freeman and Ward (1998) stated, the "deceased leaves behind the task of grieving for the survivors" (p. 216). When someone dies or something is

destroyed that has personal meaning or significance, an attachment is severed. This disruption leads to a grief reaction. This reaction can be strong or weak depending on the strength of the bond and it can be normal or pathological depending on the resilience of the individual and the support available. Freeman and Ward (1998) used Bowlbey's theories to explain this process. Once an attachment is severed the individual (or group or community) as a system must reorganize itself. It was suggested that this reorganization occurs in four phases:

> Phase I: Disbelief in the death and emotional numbing. Duration from a few hours to a week. Outbursts of extreme emotion possible.
>
> Phase II: A yearning and searching for the deceased.
>
> Phase III: Disorganization and despair. Questioning whether life is worth living.
>
> Phase IV: A start at reorganization. (p. 218)

Freeman and Ward added the proviso that these stages are fluid and not necessarily sequential. There may be much movement back and forth between the stages. Common experiences include: shock, emotional release, depression, physical symptoms of stress, anxiety, hostility, guilt, fear, and then a movement towards healing through memories and acceptance. In order to journey from the initial awareness of loss to acceptance, Freeman and Ward discussed the tasks that would facilitate the normal grieving response.

Freeman and Ward (1998) suggested that the first task is mourning. Mourning is the experiencing and expressing the reality of the death. The second task is learning to "tolerate the emotional suffering . . . while nurturing oneself both physically and emotionally" (p. 220). The third task is to transform the relationship with the deceased

from one of living reality to that of memory. In order for this to be accomplished a new relationship must be formed. The fourth task is to "develop a new sense of self-identity based on a life without the deceased" (p. 221).

Within these tasks are the seeds for ideas that the principal can use for the students and staff of the school. The task of mourning would encourage the sharing by students of their feeling and the acceptance by teachers of feeling (bring Kleenex to class). The second task (nurturing self) could be fulfilled by encouraging proper nutrition, good sleep habits, exercise, and by class discussions on the meaning of life and death. The third task of transforming the relationship with the deceased could be started by asking the students to write or engage in some creative endeavor that would honor the deceased. If the first three tasks are accomplished the fourth, accepting life without the deceased and what that means to self-identity, will typically take care of itself over time. By actively engaging in the bereavement process a sense of control and movement is created thereby mitigating feeling of helplessness and hopelessness.

Negative Coping Strategies

The principal also needs to be aware of short-term coping strategies that reduce immediate stress levels but exacerbate long-term prognosis. These strategies could be used by students and staff alike. These include "chemical coping, markedly increased environmental and interpersonal vigilance, a flight to inactivity, increased personal cynicism or interpersonal hostility, and sexual hyperactivity or incapacity" (p. 123). Some of these behaviours are easy to spot and aid the principal to monitor mid and long term effects on his students and staff arising from the CI. It should be noted that Cameron, Gersch, M'gadzah and Moyse (1995) suggested that elementary children

exhibit physical and behavioural symptoms whereas secondary and higher level children exhibit cognitive and emotional aspects of stress response symptoms (see Appendix D).

The task of managing a critical incident is indeed daunting. Through self-education, engaging or creating a CISD team, extensive pre-incident planning, co-opting community organizations and individuals, inoculation training, post event analysis, and excellent communication with all stakeholders, the principal will not only be better prepared to manage a CI but will have gone a long way towards mitigating the effects of PTSD. Finally, the principal must not forget his or her self-care. In taking care of self one will be better prepared for the daily tasks post-event and ready and more experienced to handle the next CI.

Summary

In Chapter two a brief history of emotion was presented which strongly suggested that emotion was an inconsequential aspect of man's nature that could be ignored or at least subjugated to the will of reason. Emotions were seen as a weakness and therefore relegated to the world of women. This has been the prevailing paradigm throughout recorded history and until the later part of the 21st century. Through the works of existentialists, feminists, and emotionally focused psychologists, emotion was re-examined and determined to be not only an intrinsic part of human nature, but a valued and purposive aspect. Concepts presented and explored to understand the value of emotion and its relationship to rationality included: rationality, emotionality, bounded rationality, and bounded emotionality. A new perspective was suggested in which rationality and emotionality is constantly interacting with one another. This process was further mirrored in the interplay between the individual and society in the construction of

emotion. The individual's emotional experience is not separate from the environment but co-constructed. Furthermore, the element of care and nurturing was explored as being a natural consequence of relationships that value emotions.

Next, emotion in leadership was examined. This section began in a similar fashion to the preceding section in that emotion in organizations was not seen as having any validity. However, since 1990, work by Salovey and Mayer, Goleman, Mumby and Putnam, and Cooper and Sawaf, among others, demonstrated the valued of emotions in organizations. Emotion was described as being a sixth sense that arranges the other five in meaningful patterns and then guides and interprets the world one in experiencing. When emotions in organizations are seen in a positive light workers have an increased sense of freedom, flexibility, and adaptability. Goleman, goes so far as to say that emotions are indispensable for rational decision making. This led to the exploration of the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) as first proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990).

Then next section examined crisis management including definitions, processes and stages. Effective crisis management included minimizing risk before an event through pre-incident planning, improvising and interacting with key stakeholders in a co-operative manner during an event so that sense making, roles and meaning are reconstructed. After the event, emotional responses and organizational re-adjustment are aimed at promoting recovery. Finally, post-event analysis occurs to determine improvements needed and further follow-up actions to be taken.

Successful outcomes were explored using Pearson and Clair's (1998) seven "crisis concerns" as the yardstick for determining a positive or negative outcome. These

included, signal detection, incident containment, business resumption, effects on learning, effects on reputation, resource availability, and effective decision making. It was established that organizations that supported the concept of crisis management, had plans in place and rehearsed these plans, improved their chances for successful outcomes.

The last section examined the principal and critical incident management. First, stress related concepts and definitions were presented and these ranged from regular stress to post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). Furthermore, individual reactions to stress can be normal or pathological. The most important mitigating factor discussed was having adequate social support. It was also pointed out that no one is unaffected by managing a CI. Typical responses included identification with the victim, sense of helplessness, and inadequacy. Next, interventions were examined particularly critical incident stress debriefing (CISD). CISD is used to mitigate the effects of stress but is not psychotherapy. CISD was followed by critical incident stress management (CISM) which is a comprehensive approach to stress management and covers all aspects of crisis management from the pre-crisis, crisis to the post-crisis stage.

The section on managing a CI in the school pointed out the high probability that a principal will eventually have to manage a CI. Thus, pre-crisis planning was considered essential, including inoculation training (pre-incident training and education of teachers, staff and students), setting up of a crisis team, and creating a plan. Finally, it was stressed that principals must examine their own responses during a crisis and take appropriate measures to lessen any ill effects of stress. After the crisis, debriefing is recommended and it was noted that it is often avoided by managers. Education was stressed for both self and school management and included: the necessity for a proactive

stance regarding CIs, knowledge of crisis management, flexibility in thinking, empathy, high levels of communication, understanding the grief process, awareness of negative coping strategies, ethical decision making, and emotional strength.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In this chapter the purpose of the study, research question, methodological orientation, appropriate criteria and methods, site selection, instrumentation, sampling, data collection, ethics and a brief description of the actual data gathering process are described.

The Problem Statement

What are the emotional experiences and outcomes for leaders (i.e., school principals) who have managed a critical incident involving the death(s) of a student, teacher or staff member?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the emotional experience of principals who have managed a critical incident involving death. The affective component of leaders and leadership was examined to see how leaders 1) managed their emotions, 2) managed the emotions of the people in the group or organization, and 3) what were the effects (on the leaders) of engaging in critical incidents. Other areas of interest examined were 1) communication, 2) interpersonal relationships, and 3) decision making. These areas were included, as they constituted important aspects of leadership and outcome variables of critical incidents.

Methodological Orientation

This study was conducted within a qualitative research paradigm that relied upon the tenets of "reflective empirical phenomenology" as explained by De Rivera (1984). In this approach, through interviewing and analysis, an attempt was made to "systematically

arrive at a structural description of how persons live and participate in particular situations" (pp. 682-683). The "constant comparative method" of analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 341) was used to discern themes within the narratives provided by the participants. During the data collection process (interviews), I reflected upon the data on a regular basis through inductive reasoning to identify emerging themes, questions, biases, understanding, and appropriate input for further interaction with the participants as needed. These processes follow the suggestions of well-known qualitative researchers (see Borg & Gall, 1989; Kvale,1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Osborne, 1990; Van Manen, 1984) .

Roberts (1982) stated that, in order for qualitative research to be valid, its conclusions must be based, at the very least, on sound argumentation. The argument in this dissertation followed the principles elucidated by Husband and Foster (1987) which include:

> a) a foundational assumption of the interpretive, creative, and subjective nature of personal and social reality;
>
> b) a commitment to the discovery and uncovering of the various layers of meaning in any personal or social event; and
>
> c) a concern with understanding human action from the actor's own frame of reference. (p. 52)

This way of looking at an 'event' in the world is based on different metatheoretical assumptions about reality, reliability and validity than those often relied upon in natural science (Wertz, 1986). The qualitative paradigm follows methods of proving truth claims through using:

> The coherence of the relationships between correctly applied methods, legitimate warrants employed in the interpretation of data, and the sources and soundness of the arguments established in the drafting of the claims. (Lythcott & Duschl, 1990, p. 447)

In the same manner that warrants find legitimacy through sources of authority (Toulmin, 1969), I looked to authority (i.e., established and well recognized researchers and theorists in the particular field of study and their "world views") to validate my choice of methods and methodological paradigm.

When judging significant contributions to the knowledge base in the field of adult education, Merriam (1989) suggested that qualitative methods contribute most meaningfully. Though this study was not conceived as a study in adult education, per se, it involves adults within the education system. Also, because a qualitative methodology does not have a predetermined hypothesis, it is more flexible and open to discovery (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992); an advantage of this paradigm as perceived by the researcher.

In qualitative design, the researcher is "interested in meaning . . . what they (the interviewees) experience, (and) how they interpret these experiences." (Merriam, 1988, p.19). In other words, qualitative research includes understanding people from their own frame of reference (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Furthermore, qualitative designs are seen as most efficient when the data are derived from interview transcripts (Lythcott & Duschl, 1990), which have become a favourite tool of qualitative researchers (Denzin, 1978). De Rivera (1984) suggested that, for research on emotions, a qualitative design is the most appropriate:

> Psychologists have usually studied emotions from the outside - describing objective emotional behavior or asking subjects to step outside of their feelings in order to observe and report the degree of pleasantness, (and) intensity . . . but we learn little about how emotions are lived and the role that they play in our lives. Fortunately, it is also possible to examine emotions from the inside. That is, one can ask oneself or some other person how he or she experiences the world when a given emotion is present. How is the world transformed? What impulses occur? What happens to one's sense of self, time, and space when one's emotion

> changes? To ask these questions, to really investigate emotional experience, one must use qualitative methods. (p. 677)

As I systematically examined the emotional "experience" of school principals who had managed a critical incident and determined what meaning they made of their experience, it seemed appropriate, given the above statements, to use a qualitative orientation.

Appropriate Criteria and Methods

When discussing "appropriate criteria" for examining the trustworthiness of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested four indicators: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. The first indicator, truth value or credibility, is concerned with the nature of reality. The qualitative paradigm espouses a reality that consists of "a multiple set of mental constructions. In order to demonstrate 'truth value', the naturalist must show that he or she has represented those multiple constructions adequately" (pp. 295-296). This adequacy is arrived at when the reconstruction is deemed "credible by the originators of the multiple realities" (p. 296). This credibility is the equivalent of the positivist's concept of internal validity. In this study, credibility was attained by 1) in depth interviews with the participants, 2) the use of peer debriefing as an external check on the research process, and 3) member checking to ascertain whether the interpretations of the researcher fit those of the participants.

The second indicator, applicability, is a criterion of external validity; how one determines the degree to which the findings of the present study apply to other contexts. Naturalists refer to external validity as transferability. Generally, naturalistic researchers do not concern themselves with generalizability or transferability. It is the responsibility of the reader of the research to determine to what extent the empirical evidence about contextual similarity applies to the reader's situation. "The responsibility of the original

investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgements possible" (p. 298). "Thick" description will be provided so that the reader can assess transferability. This was accomplished by the use of verbatim transcriptions from audio-tape recordings and inclusion of relevant process notes reflecting the researcher's experience.

The third indicator, consistency, is a criterion of reliability and is referred to as dependability in the naturalistic paradigm. "The naturalist sees reliability as part of a larger set of factors that are associated with observed changes," seeking to take into account factors of "instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change" (p. 299). In other words, if the inquiry was replicated using the same or similar respondents, would the results be repeated? Dependability will be enhanced by providing an audit of the research process. This audit record will delineate methodological steps and the process of inquiry engaged in by the researcher. The audit record will include listings and dates of all meetings, written communications, and personal notes. The fourth indicator, neutrality, is seen as confirmability in the naturalistic paradigm. Qualitative researchers believe that pure objectivity in research is impossible and, therefore, the researcher's biases must be fully explicated so that the reader can take into account the filter or lens through which the researcher interprets the data. "The issue is no longer the investigator's characteristics but the characteristics of the data: Are they or are they not confirmable" (p. 300)? This criterion was examined by means of an audit trail. This "confirmability audit" demonstrates how analysis and interpretation was linked to original data in a meaningful manner. The materials which were examined in the audit include the researcher's notes, transcripts, source articles, and any other data found or

created.

Site Selection

For this study site selection was deemed not critical. Participants, having been selected through purposive sampling, were given a preference as to where they wished to be interviewed. All interviews were held in the schools where the principals worked.

Instrumentation

In this study, the researcher was the instrument in the role of interviewer. The self as instrument is the prevailing orientation in naturalistic research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Seidman, 1998). This has a number of advantages, as pointed out by Borg and Gall (1989), including the ability to gain insights and to explore the situation to a depth that is not possible by quantitative methods. Likewise, Ratner and Stettner (1991) suggested that in order to have an integrated perspective we must get the participants' inside view.

As a human instrument, it is important to be aware of my biases which, in this case, are considerable and had to be taken into consideration (Borg & Gall, 1989; Kvale, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Osborne, 1990; Van Manen, 1984). I have a background in psychology and counselling and a tendency to interpret events from a psychological point of view. Also, my background as an actor and director for the stage elicits another bias in how I interpret the display of emotions. I have strong opinions, hypotheses and prejudices regarding emotional theory, trauma and recovery. In order to monitor the possible distortions that could occur due to bias, I incorporated a number of measures to guard against this possibility. These measures included periodic debriefings with my supervisor, peer reviews with fellow graduate students, and reviewing my journal and log

entries for bias.

On the other hand, my past experiences have given me a number of advantages. First, through my experience of being a counsellor I was able to quickly create a sense of trust (in all but one case) which enhanced the interview process by encouraging a deep and meaningful dialogue regarding the participants' experience. Second, my experience as an administrator could be used to create a sense of connection and mutuality through having shared similar experiences and understanding the administrator's role.

Sampling

Participants in the research project were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a selection process whereby criteria are established first and then the participants are found that meet the criteria. Permission was first obtained from the Division Directors or Superintendents to approach the principals. Then, an email was sent to all the schools in the Divisions where permission was obtained asking for volunteers. Criteria for this project included: 1) managing a CI involving the death of a student, teacher or staff member, and 2) being a principal at the time of the CI. Furthermore, in order to select for the widest experience and diversity of participants, the group of interviewees included urban and rural principals, male and female, catholic and public, elementary and high school, and Caucasian and First Nations. Ten participants were engaged for the research. It was felt that ten participants would be the optimum number acceptable to attain data saturation and create the diversity needed.

Data Collection

Once the participants were selected the second step involved semi-structured interviews with the ten principals. The purpose of the interview was to discern, in detail,

the experiences of dealing with emotion as leaders during critical incidents. Areas of inquiry and guiding questions included: did the leaders demonstrate emotionality; how did they cope with these emotions; and how did their emotions affect communication, interpersonal relationships and decision making? These interviews formed the dialogical foundation from which findings of the study emerged (Halling, Kunz & Rowe, 1994).

The process involved two separate interviews of approximately one and a half (1 ½) hours for each of the ten participants. This process was a variation of Seidman's (1998) suggestion for interviewing in which three areas should be explored. These areas are context, the issue itself, and meaning making. In Seidman's model one interview was allotted for each area. In this study, the first and second interview encompassing the context and the issue were collapsed into one interview. The second interview was devoted to meaning making. After the first interview, the audio-tapes were transcribed and a copy sent to the participant. Once they had time to read the transcript a second interview was arranged. Other sources of data included the researcher's personal logs, CI manuals, and a Master's thesis from a participant, which included his experience of a CI.

Semi-structured Interviews

The interview process was designed to first create an environment of safety and mutual respect in which the interviewee felt free to share and to expound upon their thoughts, ideas, and experiences. In order to accomplish this, I talked about the project, its design, myself, and requested the signing of any release forms and or verbal agreements that were tape-recorded. I then inquired as to whether they still wished to participate in the study and whether they understood their rights.

Upon receiving an affirmative answer I began the interview proper with some

introductory questions designed to ease the principal into the process. These included questions about their past work experience and how they became the principal in their school. These questions were then followed up with questions about their relationship to emotions and emotional expression. I asked for a description of the critical incident, how did they respond to the event, and what effects, if any, the event had on them. I asked questions about 1) how the event interacted with the principals' relationship to his or her co-workers (staff), students and parents, 2) how the event affected the principal's ability to communicate with others, and 3) how it affected their leadership style and ability and 4) how did they cope with their emotions during and after the event? (see Appendix E for guiding questions and Appendix F for transcript release form)

The second interview was focused on the participants' reflections of their experience with the CI after having read the transcripts. Here, meaning making was the focal point. What meanings did the participants attribute to their leadership style, management of their emotions, and the management of the emotions of the students and staff? How did the participants interpret their own behaviour regarding self-care after the experience? How did the experience affect the principals' lives both at the school and at home? What did they see as effective and ineffective at the district level and within their own school as it pertained to the emotional experience of managing a CI?

Ethics

At the proposal stage the first paragraph in the ethics section stated that:

> As the critical incidents examined may be recent and there is the possibility that there may be ongoing difficulties for the participants (which they may not have received help for), the researcher will be aware of and informally assessing whether the participants are manifesting any stress reactions. If stress reactions are evident this information will be shared with the participant and recommendations suggested. Fortuitously,

> the researcher has worked extensively with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and is a professional counsellor. If any negative repercussions become evident during the data gathering process the researcher can support the participant through the process.

My initial concerns at the proposal stage were accurate, in that there were some recent CIs that the principals were managing and other principals were still coping with emotional issues stemming from their experiences with past CIs. The interview process stimulated strong emotional responses. The participants were reminded of the resources available (including my own services) if they felt in need of further assistance. Interestingly, a couple of principals talked about the interview process as being therapeutic and bringing closure to their experience of the CI.

Signed permissions were received from the school Directors and the principals (see Appendix G and H). The participation of the principal for the interview process was voluntary and those who agreed to participate were given the transcripts to review. Withdrawal, at any time, by the participants was seen as a right which would not be held against the participant. Confidentiality was ensured by treating all interviews with the strictest confidence, having all materials locked when not in use, and using pseudonyms for the principals, students, staff and other individuals when quoting from the text. The dissertation proposal was submitted to the University Advisory Committee on Ethics in Human Experimentation and approved (see Appendix I: Application for Approval and Approval. BSC#: 2001-71, May 22, 2001).

The Process

The data collection process extended over a 12 month period. In that time I travelled from one end of the province of Saskatchewan to the other. The furthest distance apart for two of the schools was a 9-hour drive. Living in Saskatoon, which is in

the centre of the province, was ideal and the longest drive I had was 5 1/2 hours (one-way). Typically I did one interview in a day but sometimes I had two if the schools were located close to each other. The driving gave me time to prepare and reflect. For the second interview, I would listen to the tape of the previous interview while driving to my appointment. This was beneficial as there were often many months between first and second interviews. Even though I had read the transcripts and made up relevant questions the night before, listening to the participant's voice reminded me at an affective level of their experience and the relationship I had with that person. This process was an effective preparation for the second interview and I felt prepared for the meeting when I arrived in the school parking lot.

For the first interview the drive was an opportunity to review my questions and mentally prepare myself. There was some anxiety initially but this was tempered with the excitement of meeting a new person and hearing their story. The return trip was a time to digest what had been said and write a few notes.

The drive allowed me to sift through my own reactions and emotions that were evoked by the interview. The interview process upset me. This was a total surprise. As a counsellor I have heard many horrific tales in far greater detail and have rarely been as affected as in these interviews. Why? On reflection the answer is that in counselling I am actively engaged with the client to find a solution or come to terms with their feelings. In the interview process I was holding the space for the participant to explore their experience rather than engaging them in a therapeutic process so as to effect change. I was *witnessing* their story. Interestingly enough, a number of participants mentioned how this process - being interviewed - was therapy for them. This reaffirmed my own belief

in the healing power of letting people tell their story about difficult circumstances even without therapeutic engagement. However, as I stated previously, my emotional reaction was unexpected. The drive home allowed me time to process my response. Once home, I would often further debrief with my significant other or with a good friend who is a psychologist. For in-town interviews, if needed, I would go immediately into debriefing.

Process of Data Analysis

Once the interviews had been transcribed I read each one and made notations and highlighted sections that contained references to emotion, leadership, advice, critical incident management, communication and other topics that seemed germane to the research question. Each quote was given a descriptor which could have been specific (e.g., feeling sad) or general (communication). Once the descriptors had been applied a sorting process began in which descriptors were grouped into like meaning concepts. For example, all the descriptors pertaining to "emotion" were grouped together. At this point approximately twenty groups or preliminary themes emerged. The themes were then analysed to see if larger headings would incorporate these concepts or not. Sometimes a larger group was broken into smaller sections as when support became internal support and external support. In this distilling process some groups were determined as not being relevant to the purpose of the study and were dropped. Eventually, nine overarching themes emerged. Simultaneous to this winnowing process, the constituent parts of each theme were also being determined and supporting quotes organized into subsections. The presentation of these themes, supporting quotations, analysis, and contextualization of the themes in relationship to the principals' emotional experience of managing a critical incident involving a death(s) is provided in Chapter five.

CHAPTER 4

Demographics

The following section provides demographics of the participants; description of the principals, the principal's past history with death experiences, and establishes the critical incident(s) that was discussed during the interviews.

The Participants

Ten principals from the Province of Saskatchewan were involved in the research. Two of the principals were from grade 9-12 schools, four from K-12 schools, one from a K-7 school, one from a K-6 school, one from a nursery -12 school, and one from a grade 3-12 school. The student populations ranged from 25 to over 800. There were seven male and three female principals. Three principals were from urban schools and seven were from rural schools. Seven schools were public, two Catholic and one was a band school. Nine principals were Caucasian and one principal was originally Métis but now a Status Indian through marriage. Three principals had deaths occur between the first and second interview. The interview closest to a death was less that seven weeks and the furthest away was six years (other deaths discussed were as far back as 30 years). Many deaths were recalled in the second interview that had been forgotten in the first.

Table 1 presents selected demographics describing the principals and their schools. Information includes name, age, gender, highest degree, length of time as a principal, deaths experienced as a principal, other deaths experienced in the school system (e.g., as a VP or teacher), identifying the school as urban or rural, Catholic or public (including band and colony), and number of students. As can be seen from the descriptive statistics, there is a broad range of administrative experience (1-17 years),

total deaths experienced (1-12), and a wide range of school types (elementary, high school, and K-12) and enrolment (25 – 800).

Table 4.1 Demographics of School Principals and Schools

Name	Age	Degree	Yrs. as Prin.	Deaths as Prin.	Other School Deaths	Urban/ Rural	Public, Catholic, or Band	School (e.g., K-12)	Student number
Susan (f)	45	M	4	2	3	Urban	Catholic	9-12	800
Allan (m)	43	M	7	1	2	Rural	Public	3-12	330
Bob (m)	45	B	10	5	2	Rural	Public	K-12	125
Mark (m)	53	M	16	5+	1+	Rural	Public	K-12	225/800
Tony (m)	45	M	2	3	1+	Urban	Catholic	9-12	850
Maria (f)	45	B	2	5	7+	Rural	Band	N-12	500
Paul (m)	47	M	16	1	-	40/60	Public	K-6	210
Henry (m)	53	M	15	5	1	Rural	Public	K-12 9-12	180/800
Sherri (f)	28	B	1	1	-	Rural	Public Colony	K-7	25
Alex (m)	53	B	17	2	4	Rural	Public	K-12	215

Prin. = Principal, m = male, f = female, B = Bachelor's degree, M = Master's degree, N = Nursery
Split numbers (e.g., 120/500) represents number of students in two different schools

Further examination of the data shows that all but one principal was between 43 and 53 years of age with a mean age of 45.7 years (median age = 45 years; mode = 45 years). Educationally, six principals had their Masters degree and four had their Bachelors. Regarding years of experience there were three clusters: four principals had

1-4 years experience, two had 7-10 years and four had 15-17 years experience (mean = 9 years, median = 8.5 years, bimodal = 2 years and 16 years). The number of deaths experienced by the principals ranged from one to five (mean = 3.5, median = 2.5, mode = 5).

Principals' Contexts

The following is a description of each principal, their current school, and the primary deaths that constituted the major focus of the interviews. These are descriptive only to set the scene and to give context for further explorative analysis. Histories of the participants' past experiences with death are also included where available. Sometimes this was a death experienced as a teacher early in their career or it may have been a recent death of a family member. All deaths that occurred prior to the critical incident(s) were important and had some degree of emotional impact on the participants. In a sense, his or her past experience with death gave the frame through which each participant viewed their experience of CI(s) in the school.

Susan

Susan is 45-year-old principal who had experienced five deaths as an administrator. She was the principal at the time of two deaths --one a student and the other a staff member. Susan has worked at her present location since the school was built and has been the principal for the past four years. She was a vice-principal prior to her promotion. The school is a modern facility with bright open spaces and has experienced a rapid growth in the student population since its inception expanding from 200 to 800 students.

Susan presented herself as a high-energy person in both interviews. She was

open, friendly, humorous, and willing to share her experience. She described herself as "curious" (P125L3) about the world around her. Susan is not a person that suffers fools lightly yet she has a lot of compassion and is willing to examine herself and her actions. Her unpretentiousness was refreshing and we were constantly laughing especially at her manner of speaking (very earthy). Susan, like all of the principals I interviewed, is genuinely concerned about the children in her school and her first love was teaching. This presents a quandary for her at times with her responsibilities as a principal and can be seen when she says, "In this position you become farther and farther away from the kids and the reason I think you'd get into teaching is because you want to get closer and closer to the kids" (P133L19-22) and as the principal she was concerned about being removed or distanced from them. Susan was full of passion in her conversations with me and stated that it is important for her to come from the "heart" (P137L28) when approaching her responsibilities and relationships in the school. She also believes that work should be fun and have a learning aspect to it. "IS IT FUN?? What am I gonna get? Am I gonna learn? If I'm not learning anything, I, I can't! I can't do it!" (P152L22-23) Susan is also a high-speed talker which I think reflects her energy and passion.

The following quotes give an idea of her relationship and orientation with death based on her personal experiences:

> My Grandmother [died] – when I was a teacher at St. Francis. I guess that's the one that I reflect on. Um, we needed to go with my Mom to the small town. And we must have met the undertaker who's first day he was on the job . . . He takes us to the back, and to this day . . . it doesn't bother me. But he took us to the back room. To sh -, I guess you show the body . . . my Baba, my Grandma – lying on the table, covered partially with a white sheet. And I can remember thinking "Well, that's kind of weird." But that's okay. I think that's what you do with undertakers. And then he talks about, you know, did your Baba wear make up? Well of course we start to laugh . . . we say, well "No." So he's taking, honest to God, he's

> taking out the make-up and putting [it on] her, I said "No, no. She doesn't do her rouge like this!" And my sister is going "What are you doing?!" So we made a pact we're not telling Mom – you know, there's things in life – we're not telling Mom this one! [laughter] So we walk out, you know, [laughs] thinking, honest to God!. . . . And we saw how a community and cousins, and you name em! All of a sudden – there's the meal at the funeral. Well you just do that! The expectation is you do that for people to help them and then you joke and you laugh. (P167L17-44)

Even though there is a sense of proportion and humour in Susan's past experience of death this does not imply that she was not serious with the deaths in her school. The first school death Susan talked about was a teacher she had taught and coached and who then became a colleague. The death was brought on by a sudden illness. The teacher was young and healthy prior to her illness:

> She was very athletic, in really good shape. By October she began to feel quite ill. Couldn't figure it out, M R I, the whole shebang, a battery of tests. She was hospitalized in early December and passed away on the 19th of December. (P127L28-33)

The other death involved a student who had recently transferred from another school. He was receiving counselling in the school and had previous failed attempts at suicide. Finally, he succeeded. The following describes her reactions:

> For me always the sadness. . . . Always great sadness you couldn't reach them. Someone couldn't reach them. Someone didn't see. The biggest fear, especially with a young person, with suicide, is often the other kids around. It's always, the suicide. They've solved their problems but they've left problems for other kids. (P133L36-P134L3)

The last part of this quote is indicative of Susan's concern for her students and her awareness of the effects of a CI on the school population.

Allan

Allan is 43 years old with seven years experience as the principal of a rural school with 330 students. He has been in the community for 20 years. Allan's CI involved the

death of a young girl who was diagnosed with cancer, went into remission, then had a re-occurrence four years later and subsequently died. This was Allan's first death as a principal and it was a "real learning experience." (P76L5)

Allan was supportive of this project mentioning how difficult it had been for him to get participants for his Master's degree. He was open and thoughtful when answering questions. One of Allan's earlier experiences with student deaths occurred when he was a teacher. Allan talked about the senselessness of these deaths:

> I was a second year teacher when we had a student who was in a car accident, and . . . it was a stupid - -he'd been partying all night. He was driving back from a town . . . just a five minute drive out . . . he came around a curve into town and he lost control on the ice and he slid into the ditch. He didn't roll it or anything, just slid into the ditch. Um, he was right on the edge of town, there was almost no snow. There was a little bit of ice in the ditch, so he tried to get out. And he just kept spinning and spinning and spinning and spinning the tires and couldn't go anywhere. You could actually see his house from where he was, but he was so drunk that he just didn't worry about it, he just lay down on the front seat of the car and went to sleep. And from him trying to get out he started the car on fire. So the car started to smoke and smoke and smoke and smoke and it started on fire, and [clears throat] people actually saw the car start to smoke and rather than go to the car, cause people thought the car was empty, they then went to try and get to the fire department. Well of course in a small town you got to try and get the fire department out there and who's the fire chief and where is he and blah, blah, blah. And by the time they got there he was dead. So, it was very senseless. . . . My first year here we also had, on the last day of school in June, there was a group of kids who were partying and they were driving down a road, a country road um, about 10 miles to the east of here. And they came out onto the highway and didn't know it was the highway. I think that's what happened was they didn't even realize they were so close to the highway. They just thought it was another crossroads, and they ended up coming across the highway and ended up in a collision with another vehicle. And a girl who would've been going into grade 12 was killed. So, so there's been two. (P82L35-P83L29)

Prior to Allan's student moving into her final stages of dying of cancer, Allan's mother-in-law also died of cancer.

> My wife had just lost her mother to cancer within the last year and a half before that so we'd seen somebody go through - - sort of the final stages of that, and it wasn't a very pleasant experience and I guess that brought back some of those memories. And to see somebody so young having go through it, - - it was a little disheartening. (P84L27-31)

Allan spent considerable amount of time with Shauna during her slow and inexorable decline and at the very end Allan chose not visit her. Referring back to his experience with his mother-in-law's death, at the end of the process, "it's just not a very dignified way to leave this world." (P95L17) Allan elaborated further:

> Well, it started - - she was in grade five . . . she was playing ball one day and hurt her leg and her mom took her to the doctor and they suspected that there might be a growth there and off to [a nearby city] she went. And lo and behold she had a very aggressive form of bone cancer. And so what they ended up doing was amputating the lower half of her right leg . . . . And it worked out very well. . . . And then she did come back to school. . . . And then it was about a year before she finally passed away that she wasn't feeling very well again and she went back to [a nearby city] for a regular check up and they said that the cancer had returned and they noticed a growth on her spine. And so over the course of the next year she was in and out of hospital and they did, they did some very major surgery. . . . And by June of that year she was feeling not too bad. I talked to her mom in June and she said "Hey, she really would like to try to come to school in the fall." And I said "Look, whatever we can do to accommodate her, she can come half time, a quarter time, just however she feels." So, the growth that they tried to remove, they couldn't get it all. And so they go in and they put this titanium cage around this growth just to keep it from putting pressure on her spine so she could walk. But she eventually lost feeling in her legs and she couldn't walk anymore so she got this motorized scooter and, she lived right across the street from me so, she would - - it was four blocks from the school. So, up onto the north road allowance here she'd come every day and on her scooter, and someone would get the door and then she'd come with her scooter and the kids were really supportive in helping her around the school. And so she did very well at that coming about, hmm, half time or a little bit better for September and October. And then she started to feel more and more sick - - we could all kind of see that she was deteriorating fairly quickly. By December the first she was in the hospital and [we] heard that the cancer had spread - - a tumour on her brain, and uh, multiple tumours on her spine, and her lungs and that kind of thing and it was just a matter of time, so. And then it was just a few days before Christmas holidays before she passed away. (P78L20-P79L33)

With Allan's story we start to see the influence of a previous death (his mother in law) on his relationship with the student that was dying, the issue of time or duration of knowing an individual, and degree of involvement, which was high in this case.

Bob

Bob is a 45-year-old principal at a rural public school in which he has been leading for 10 years. He teaches 75% of the time and stated that he runs the school with the other teachers. Bob recounted a story that when their previous principal left all the teachers drew lots to see who would be the next principal, and he lost. He became principal by default. This story was told with a wry sense of humour. Bob comes across as a very easy-going type and there was a lot of playful banter in the staff room between him and his fellow teachers.

At the time of the accident there were about 125 students. Five students died in a vehicular accident wiping out four percent of his student population. Two other students were also injured in the accident. Bob experienced two previous deaths as a teacher and was brief when describing the current accident: "The students were coming back from a youth week-end . . . and were hit by a train." (P322L12-13)

Bob had mentioned that prior to becoming the principal he had had some previous experience with children dying. I asked him if that had helped prepare him in any way as a principal managing the CI that he faced. He replied:

> I would think so, greatly. Cause the first ones were much younger - - when I was a much younger teacher. Actually those were probably tougher cause I was a different age. I was probably - - it was my second year teaching. I found that was way tougher. . . . I was much younger and it was much more difficult and then as you get older you get a little wiser or whatever. When you have that experience with such things, as to handle those types of situations. (P324L22-28)

He further expanded on how a multiplicity of this type of experience had, despite the hardships, prepared him for managing death and his reactions.

> I've been to a lot of funerals in my life, you know whether it be relatives, friends who have died, etc. I've seen lots and uh, experience, experience helps. Faith and experience. You know what to expect. I'm not a very outgoing person, I'm quiet but, . . . well even as a child, you know, as grandparents and that, aunts or uncles - - most of them weren't tragic, per se, you know. You get old, you die, you know – for whatever reason. Um, tragic ones, we did have some as friends growing up, etc. . . . If you have lots of those experiences going through those situations, fear isn't a factor as much anymore. Or however you want to define fear. Fear of the unknown, more so maybe. Maybe a little more confidence as to, you know, your abilities and what you're capable of doing and what you're not capable of doing. (P340L19-P341L2)

Bob experienced the largest number of deaths in a single critical incident (5) of all the principals in this study. Any multiple death incident has added stressors as, for example, one attends multiple funerals, eulogies and wakes. This puts considerable pressure on the principal and is tiring both physically and emotionally. It would seem fortunate that Bob had much previous experience with death throughout his life as his experiences and faith helped him to cope with this catastrophic event.

Mark

Mark is a 53-year-old principal at a large rural school. In conversation he describes himself as the quintessential old-time-principal. He is a believer in corporal punishment (though used rarely - his preferred punishments are cleaning up the school grounds and filling in gopher holes). Each school day begins with O Canada and hats are not to be worn in the school. Mark sees himself as the perfect target for feminists as he is a "large, white, middle-aged male in power" (personal communication). Mark says this with a twinkle in his eye and the anticipation of a reaction as there is nothing he likes better than a good intellectual joust and the opportunity to correct the wayward soul from

the fallacies of their beliefs. Mark is a hands-on leader in his school and he sees it as his duty to take responsibility and handle difficult issues personally. I job shadowed Mark for two days and discovered that he has boundless energy, loves his work and "solving problems." (P220L43) "The buck stops here" would be a perfect motto to have inscribed over his office doorway. Though Mark exudes absolute confidence and conviction in his attitudes and beliefs, this is tempered with a huge heart that genuinely loves the kids, staff, and the school community. He is dedicated to his work and the well being of all those under him.

Mark's past experience included the accidental death of his parents:

> Both my parents were killed in an accident in 1989 and it was a huge loss to us. They died instantly and they died together, you know. We all face it. We all experience it sooner or later. Unless we ourselves are cut short, you know. But I think that was one of the messages that death is a part of the cycle of life really it's - - we all take our turn. We all go through life and eventually we pass on, right. (P221L19-24)

The first death recalled for the interview occurred when Mark was the principal of a rural school with about 250 students:

> This involved one of our senior students who was quite an extraordinary young man. A large powerfully built young man. Not an extroverted kid, but certainly confident. Not focused on academics. Focused on athletics and sports and his social life. [He] was certainly not a problem in the school. He was looked up to by many of our students. He was an aboriginal young man from one of the reserves north of us and he had many friends, both aboriginal students and white kids too. At that particular school there was a very close relationship between the white kids and the aboriginal kids. It was a very mixed school in that regard. They grew up in that area and had gone through kindergarten and all the way up. . . . He would've been 17. He would have been in grade 12. . . . [It was] quite something to see him go up and spike a volleyball. He had that power and you know and he was very strong physically and that was the focus of his life I think. And the girls liked him. He was one of the Big Men on campus - that type of guy. He would've qualified as a popular kid. The teachers liked him and the kids looked up to him, and he had lots of girlfriends, that kind of thing. Lots of friends. So he was into enjoying

> life. And he, like most guys, liked to party and so forth and in a weekend in [a local town] he got into a party and there was some people who did not like him. From a different community and he got into a fight. A knife fight. And he got stabbed in the chest. And actually, at first, it did not look like much and he lived for a number of minutes and then he all of a sudden, he collapsed. They called an ambulance. He was rushed to hospital but they could not revive him. (P211L11-38)

In this description I heard the wistfulness in Mark's voice at the loss of such a vital person. There was a disbelief that someone so physically strong and full of life could be taken away so easily.

> A more recent death in his current school was shocking in a different way.
>
> Well we had one just in this school. I wasn't quite as close to the student but a younger guy, a younger kid in grade 8. And he had just dropped out of school actually and it happened this year. It had quite an impact on the school. They were playing Russian roulette. He and a buddy. One bullet in the chamber, in one chamber, and he's the guy that got her. A bullet in the head. It was unbelievable. (P221L35-39)

As happened with other principals, in the second interview many other deaths were recalled.

> Even now that we're talking we had another death in that school too. A girl, this was - - it's funny I haven't thought of it, I don't know where I have been. But this was really tragic too. A wonderful young student once again. . . . They drank antifreeze. They thought it was lemon gin in the back of a car. And I remember that and I remember all the stuff I went through with that. And for some strange reason I hadn't thought of that. So that's two. . . . (P234L21-28) just a really wonderful personality. . . . (L32) I think she was 16. . . . (L34) She died over the space of three days. (P235L6)

A theme in Mark's experience with death seems to be his attempt to understand the senselessness and suddenness in which death can strike and strike down people in the prime of life, whether it was his parents, the high school star athlete, or a young girl drinking anti-freeze.

Tony

Tony is a 45-year-old principal with two years experience at his current school. Tony seemed to enjoy the interview process even though he acknowledged being very nervous. He was fully engaged in the process and used the time to explore and further enhance his understanding of past CI experiences.

Tony has experienced three deaths in his current school. One of those deaths occurred between the first and second interviews. Tony also experienced two deaths as an assistant principal, one of which was a murder. "I think having experienced those two situations in an administrative capacity helped me also with these situations here. But even those two, I remember those as clear as day." (P384L17-19)

As a principal, the first incident that Tony described was a boy about to go into grade 12 who was killed "in a car accident." (P367L19) In the second incident:

> A girl died. It was that meningitis scare but it wasn't the actual meningitis. It was meningicoccal wherever. We had a school dance here and she was supposed to come to the school dance but she didn't show up. . . . and some of the grade 12 girls had found out that this girl had died. And the word started spreading like wildfire over at the dance. So we had to deal with it then and the aftermath as well. (P367L29-35)

In this incident the teachers at the party had to deal with a panic situation that threatened to get out of control. In the second interview Tony talked about the death of a staff member. Interestingly, in the first interview Tony mentioned that he had not gone through a death of a colleague and that was a concern for him. How would he cope? The teacher that died was "a very popular staff member who'd been here since the school opened up - - 17, 18 years ummm (pause) died suddenly of a heart attack." (P386L31-33)

Tony has not had a lot of experience with death situations. He stated that his school experiences were invaluable in helping him deal with his fear of the death of a

colleague.

> The incidents that we dealt with the students, the deaths, I don't want to say "prepared us" because I don't think anything can prepare you for the death of a staff member or a death of anyone, because every situation is different, but I think you, you, as a person, you go back and you use what you experienced and the things that worked in the previous incidents to try and help you get through and deal with the current incident sometimes. (P388L25-31)

Tony seems to be on an incremental journey in his experiences of managing death in his school. The first incident occurred in the summer at the beginning of his first year as principal. The second death occurred a few months into the school term but he did not have an intimate relationship with the deceased. The third death, however, was his biggest fear coming true. It was the death of a colleague that he had known for some time.

Maria

Maria is a 45-year-old principal at a large rural band school. She has experienced many deaths at the school both as an administrator and as a teacher. The deaths she chose to talk about in the first interview, even though more than three years ago, sparked a strong emotional response and the tape was stopped until she was ready to continue. The focus of the discussion was on two sisters, who lived close to Maria on the reserve. Maria knew them personally and had been highly involved in their lives through her functions as a principal. "In that incident there were two students, two young girls, approximate age about 10 and 11. [They] were involved in a . . . house fire and lost their life [sic]" (P35L10-11)

Maria had experienced many deaths in her community (the band) and in the school.

> Other deaths related to people within the school. And just the community itself. . . . Smaller communities - - when things happen everybody knows about it and it does affect everybody in some ways. So it's like you're constantly dealing with it - - there's always something. . . . In the 25 years that I've been here I would say over a dozen students, at least, that have passed away in some way or another. (P54L7-12)

Once again, like other principals, after the first interview, Maria remembered other deaths. She also mentioned that deaths outside the direct school community also affect the school (i.e., deaths in the community proper).

> So in this year alone we've lost four students in our school. And see I never, I never thought to talk about those things when we were discussing - - I somehow just focused on those two incidents and there was one incident just before school started, the August long weekend, where there was a drowning and it was one of our students. So that was just before school started. Then I believe it was in November we had a young lady who had one child who had been away from school for a few years and had just come back to finish her grade twelve. Enrolled in an adult twelve program and died a violent death - her boyfriend or someone - they got into a fight and she was stabbed to death. Then there was the young boy in February who shot himself and then in May we had one of our students form our Life Skills Program, he's a multiple disabilities student, went to [a local city] for an evaluation in the hospital and somehow he was in dome crib and somehow he, I don't know how that happened. He got caught in the crib and he was basically hung, hung himself [pause] and then just the community itself like um - - We think of all the things that go on and that's just directly involving the school but throughout a year, like there's so many different incidents community wise that still affect the kids and the staff in the school. (P60L26-P61L3)

Maria has experienced the most deaths of any principal and over a prolonged period (25 years). Living on reserve and working in a band school she has encountered an inordinate amount of traumatic deaths and Maria typifies the emotional/psychic costs not only for herself but for the community as well.

Paul

Paul is a 47-year-old principal at a school that he describes as 95% urban. There are 350 students housed in a bright new school. Paul was very deliberate and thoughtful

in his responses to my questions. He valued this opportunity and was "pleased to help with someone's pursuit of knowledge, research." (P19L19-20)

The death discussed for the interview occurred when Paul was the principal of a previous school (which has since been amalgamated with another school into the new structure where the interview took place and in which Paul is also the principal). The former school had approximately "200 to 210" students and was an urban (60%) and rural (40%) mix.

This CI involved a colleague whom Paul had "personally known for probably 15 years and then worked with her for probably five." (P5L9-10) She was "a grade 3 teacher . . . two years from retirement . . . and just collapsed right in her kitchen . . . heart attack." (P4L4-10) Paul had a very close and personal experience of death with his wife when they lost a child. He was familiar with the feeling that he encountered when managing the death in his school.

> I had a stillborn child at one point in time, so I had [deep breath], I had had that empty feeling before. . . . (P8L25-26) I had been through that and I had to be strong - as a husband and, as, as a father. And uh, I had to hold the thing together. And so I sort of felt the same thing and certainly as principal of the school, people looked to me for stability, for uh, cope, coping. I wasn't allowed to be - - a person among them, I was, I was, holding up the fort to some extent. (P9L1-5)

Paul's experience demonstrates clearly how past experience can set a pattern for future experience. Paul was "holding up the fort," in the school, in the same way that he had to support his wife after they had lost their child. This historical patterning is evident in almost all the principals interviewed.

Henry

Henry is a 53-year-old principal with 15 years experience in that position. At the

time of the interview, Henry was the principal of a large rural school of 800+ students and some of the deaths discussed occurred while he was at much smaller rural schools. He was interested in this particular research project as he had been heavily involved in creating a critical incident manual and had been a support person for CIs at other schools. Henry's self-acceptance and sense of competence and confidence was impressive. We discussed this topic of self-confidence at length and fortunately Henry was both insightful and willing to share his past together with how his experiences made him the person he was.

Henry has lived through five tragedies as a principal and one as a teacher. All the deaths occurred while he was employed at previous schools. The first incident Henry described happened at a K-12 school of approximately 180 students in a rural setting.

> The first incident was a pre-graduation celebration. The young lady would have been 15 coming on 16 coming back from a party at a small lake. A couple of other girls in the car rolled on a gravel road. And the young lady was killed didn't have a seat belt on ended up going straight through the sunroof at the top of the car thrown from the vehicle and uh - - was killed. It was a smaller community - - big impact. (P179L31-P180L2)

The second incident involved another young woman who had a,

> . . . pretty fractured home life. Certainly would've been [pause] fitting the, you know, profile of a dropout. . . . We thought that we'd got her to the stage where she'd worked her way past that. Then all of a sudden she wasn't in the school. She wouldn't come to the school. Looked around and couldn't find her in the community. . . . She went to [a city] and hit the streets there. Got her back. . . . We began working with her again. . . . She became anorexic. . . . Took off and went to [the same city] again. Got her back again. She sort of lapsed back into anorexia and she began to really chew Tylenol. And eventually it built up in her system and her organs, you know, the combination of Tylenol and I guess anorexia, her organs slowly sort of grind to a halt. (P186L22-33)

This woman unexpectedly died of a heart attack. Henry then talked about a suicide of 16-year-old boy. "He went into the basement and put a hunting rifle under his chin and

pulled the trigger." (P187L28-29)

In response to the question about previous experiences with death Henry mentioned his parents and how he was not able to attend their funerals as they were in Europe.

> I moved when I was young. You know, since I'd been in Canada, my parents have both passed away. You're six thousand miles apart; you know that death is a part of life – it's inevitable. You realize with that distance that, you know, you have to plan; you have to sort of be able to, you know, you learn to make accommodation for that. Sort of build in some sort of coping mechanism. And you do think you build in some copying mechanism – until it happens! [laughter] (P202L34-P203L6)

Another early experience, as a teacher, was the death by suicide of his first principal.

> Way back at the beginning of my career, long before I was involved in administration, yeah actually my principal, my very first principal, committed suicide. . . .(P201L16-18) Yeah that hurt big time. . . . (L22) I was actually away finishing off my degree when it happened. . . . He committed suicide between Christmas and New Years and we ended up burying him early in the New Year. It was, it was tough because I had, I had a really, really good relationship with him. . . . (P201L23-29) That was shock. And surprise, and also questioning. (P201L36-37)

Like Mark, Henry had a lot of "questions" as to the whys of unexpected deaths and the sense of disappointment that occurs when a death cannot be prevented. This becomes more apparent, later in the chapter, when Henry talked about his frustration. He and his counsellor were finally making progress while working with a young woman with anorexia when she suddenly died of a heart attack.

Sherri

Sherri is a 28-year-old second year principal working at a Hutterite colony. The school is under provincial jurisdiction. There are 25 students in a one-room school with students in grades K-7. This was one of the more recent deaths, happening just seven weeks prior to the interview. Sherri, from my observations and her own self-report was

still in a state of shock. When I returned for the second interview, four months later, she said that she had gotten over it.

Sherri said that the recent death of her father prior to the student death affected her relationship to the CI. She was still in shock over her father's death and walked through the CI as if she was not totally there.

> If it would have happened at a different time in MY life it would've - - I would've probably behaved differently, but I had lost my Dad in August, and as horrible as it was, I had such a horrible time dealing with that, and then this – I had already kind of shut myself down from things. . . . (P295L26-30) I don't think I went through the same things that I would have normally gone through - um - so I just - I was kind of numb. (P313L25-26)

The death that Sherri had to manage occurred in her school:

> The kids were downstairs at recess playing . . . floor hockey – and one of them came up and we were photocopying in here and – just myself and one other aide. One of the students ran up and said that um, another student wouldn't stand up. And so, I ran downstairs – we both ran downstairs – to see what was going on and there was a student lying on the floor and he wasn't moving at all. And so I went over to him and tried to - - I thought, actually I thought he was just playing games, cause they do – they'll do that just to get us to - - go. So when I went to him originally I was yelling out his name at him and um - - he wasn't responding. So, I sent all the kids upstairs and started to perform CPR on him and sent my aide upstairs to call 911. . . . His sister had come down – the sister that's in school – had come downstairs – uh, I don't know any time frame, but – came downstairs right away and with a note from my aide telling me stuff to do, just that the 911 operator tells the person and the phone is in the office so it was hard to relay. And then she came. I sent her back upstairs while I continued to perform CPR and then she had phoned over to her family's house and his two older sisters had come over and come downstairs and stayed there for a few minutes. And then they came upstairs and his Mom came downstairs and um, and just took one look at us and turned around and went back upstairs. And I had told one of the sisters when she went up to send Margo, which is my aide, back down. And she was - - wasn't coming and it was taking forever for her to come back downstairs. And finally she did, I was quite insistent with anybody who was down there that she needed to come back downstairs. But it was the ambu - - or the 911 operators were holding her on the line, which is their job, BUT! It was a different situation, we were too far away from each other to make any use. So finally she just hung up. [chuckle]

> And came downstairs - well she hung - she left them off the hook. Set it down, came downstairs and she then - - she just talked to me and assisted me in doing CPR. He had, he aspirated at that time, before she ever came down he had thrown up. So, I think I knew by that time that it wasn't, it wasn't looking very good. He wasn't responding at all. To begin with he was making gasping – huge gasping um, breaths, like really shaking sounds, which later the doctor and everybody had said was probably just his last breath. They said he had actually probably died instantly before we even reached him. . . . We just kept applying CPR until the ambulance got there. And, which, I don't know how long it was; I'm guessing it was 20 minutes, 15, 20 minutes by the time they got out here. And then they worked on him for a few minutes downstairs and then they just took him into town to the doctor down there. (P286L10-P287L18)

Sherri's experience is very dramatic and different from all the others in this study in that she was on the scene and directly involved with the dying person. Her explanation as to the effects she felt post-event, center on her being still in shock from her father's death and not being able to respond emotionally to this critical incident. This indeed could be one or part of the explanation for her feeling disconnected. Another might be that she was having a stress response to the event itself. Sherri mentioned that her debriefing did not occur until three days later and she would have preferred to have seen someone much sooner [Mitchell & Everly (2001) recommend that debriefing occur between twenty four and seventy two hours post event].

Alex

Alex is 53 years old with 17 years experience as a principal. He works at a public rural school of approximately 215 students. He had two deaths to deal with up to the time of the first interview. The first incident involved a suicide that occurred eight years previously that upon our discussion evoked such strong emotion that the tape was shut off until Alex felt ready to continue. Just prior to that death Alex had gone through the "long struggle" (P248L6) associated with a slow death, by cancer, of his mother-in-law. The

second death involved a 16-year-old girl with multiple sclerosis (MS). Her prognosis was not good and the death was anticipated.

By the second interview a qualitative change seemed to have occurred in Alex's ability to manage critical incidents and his emotions. Even though he had managed multiple deaths since the first interview Alex had a surprising degree of equanimity. When talking about the first death (suicide) Alex mentioned that he had thought about that death every day for six years and that the experience had caused him much grief. In the second interview it appeared that he had come to terms with this past death. In his own words when talking about the original incident, "One of our students in grade ten committed suicide. . . . (P243L23-24) and that was very, very, traumatic at the time." (P244L3) Alex's experience of the recent deaths seems to have had a positive effect on his ability to deal with death on a personal level. He did not seem troubled like he was with the first death despite the multiple critical incidents that he had to deal with in the school and in his personal life. Between interviews a coach died, a brother of a teacher died, a stepfather of a student died (this death left the daughter without parents, as her mother had died previously), and three other students were left without parents when a house fire killed them -- two of the students escaped the house and watched it burn down. Between these tragedies Alex's cat of 14 years died and a week later his father died after a minor operation.

> Since Christmas it's been a blur of critical incidents. . . . For the staff here and for myself it seems like it's been just dealing with one critical incident after another. It's really been an aberration in that sense in the school district. (P266L10-13)

The death of the parents of the three students was the most difficult for the school. Alex described how he reacted in reference to the difficulty he had with the first death he

experienced as a principal (the suicide).

> But that was a tragedy. . . . I talked about Harry [the student] and I know I got a little bit emotional about it [laughs] because it dredged up some stuff I hadn't felt for a long time. This was just like - it just brought a lot of those memories - I know when I heard them, you know, the first ½ hour, you're just, where do you go? What do you do? You're in shock. But then you start, you know, well, I'll get some counsellors in and get things going and we - we came through it very well - the school. But that was a major tragedy. (P270L8-15)

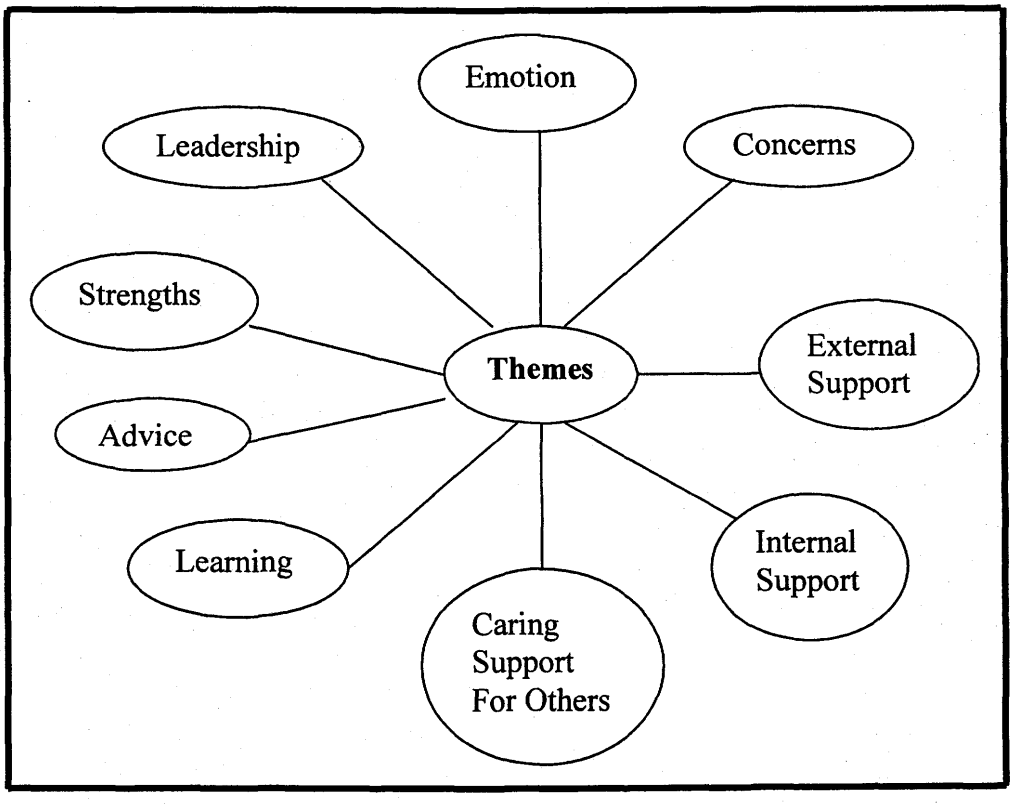
Alex's transformation in his relationship with death between the first and second interviews was startling and as profound as it was unexpected.

CHAPTER 5

Data Analysis of Themes

Interviewing ten principals, twice, provided a plethora of data. In order to give context, create order and instill meaning, the information is presented using both pictorial representation in the form of figures and in narrative form through analysis and use of quotes from the participants. Themes that were deduced from the data are shown in Figure 5.1. Through a process of constant comparative analysis as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) nine themes emerged from the data and included the principals': emotion, concerns, internal support, external support, caring support for others, strengths, leadership, advice and learning.

Figure 5.1 General Themes Related to Principals' Experience



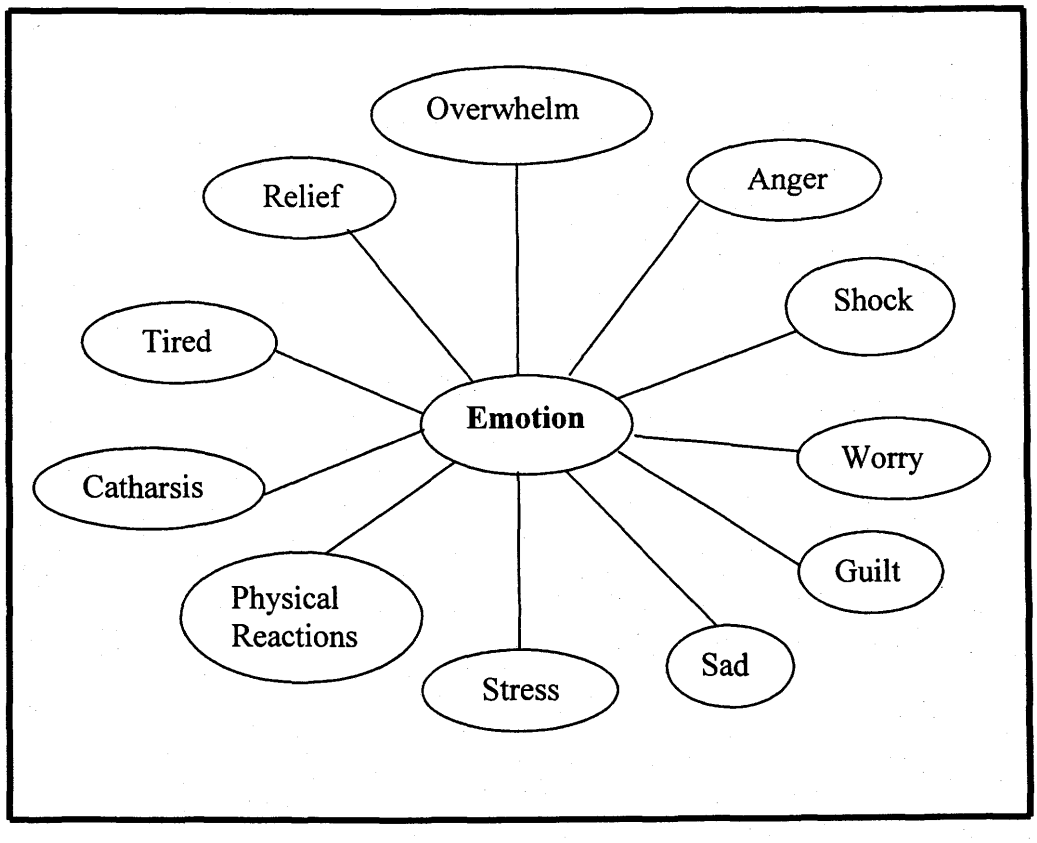
Each theme is displayed in a figure with the constituent elements that comprised that

theme followed by a description of the theme, presentation of the data supporting the theme, and analysis.

Emotion

The different aspects of the principals' emotional experience are depicted in Figure 5.2. Referring back to Lazarus and Lazarus' (1994), the definition of emotion included physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects. All these aspects are represented by the eleven constituent elements in the theme of emotion. Principals felt shock, guilt, sad, tired, anger, worry, stress, overwhelm, catharsis, relief and physical reactions. Other descriptors used by the participants included: frustration, hopeless, despair, bad, concern, numb, pride, joy, disbelief, intense, power, failure, hollow, upset, and emotional.

Figure 5.2 Constituent Elements of Principals' Emotional Experience



Generally, the principals were not inclined to examine their feelings directly, though some were acutely aware of their experience and willing to describe it. The reticence could be that the feelings they had experienced were not particularly pleasant and had no desire to dredge them up. Despite a general reluctance to explore emotional issues, six emotional states were identified. Not all principals experienced all the states mentioned but all felt shock, tiredness, sadness, and to varying degrees, feelings of helplessness. Guilt was more often associated with suicides and anger was felt most intensely against administration when they were non-supportive or unaware of their need to connect with the principal. Anger was sometimes directed at the student that died.

The emotions experienced by the principals in the first few minutes upon hearing of the event, are surprisingly similar. Shock and disbelief are the first reactions. What follows are examples that include, but are not limited to, feeling of numb, sad and disheartened. Feeling disheartened was often mentioned simultaneously with sadness and sadness was described as a "down" or "bad" feeling. For most principals, after experiencing these initial emotions, they put their feeling aside and focused on what needed to be done. While examining what needed to be accomplished there were often feelings of worry and concern for students and parents. If the principals were not able to put aside the initial distressing feelings they would then move into feeling overwhelmed, helpless, or inadequate. Depending on how the CI played out over the next few days the emotional response varied considerably from feelings of pride to guilt, worry and anger. Some principals were able to recall their physical experience during the CI and at some point in the process they all felt tired. By the end of the CI, many mentioned feeling relief. When examining the event as a whole, principals classified the time of the critical

incident as stressful.

Shock

One of the dictionary definitions of shock is "a sudden and disturbing mental impression" (1984). This definition and the experience of unexpected news that the principals' received combined with their reactions formed a match. This sense of shock was mitigated slightly when the death was expected (e.g., death due to cancer) but even then, the "disturbing mental image" was reinforced if a similar death had been recently experienced.

In the interviews, the most commonly identified emotion was shock. Often this descriptor was used in tandem with disbelief and surprise. Alex described his initial reaction as one of "shock" and questioning "How, why, what?!" (P253L29) Feelings of shock were not restricted to unexpected events. Even when the death was expected, shock was still experienced. Allan, when talking about the death of his student by cancer stated that, "there's still that initial shock and the dealing with that." (P75L23) Bob described his initial reaction to the event as, "Shock, then it was just flat line." (P342L1-2) When Mark first heard the news of the death he stated that, "I was just in shock, unbelievable. This cannot be. . . . (P212L7) I felt a huge sense of loss." (L12) In another incident, the death of a teacher's daughter, Mark was powerfully affected.

> She (the teacher and parent) got the news at school and she came down the hallway and she was doubled over screaming and I thought she was having a heart attack. I had no idea what happened (her teacher's daughter had died). . . . And when we got the news we were literally in shock. She was an absolutely wonderful child. You know, she reminded me of my daughters. . . I was just overcome. . . . We were just in shock. (P222L22-30)

Like all of the principals Tony felt shock at the initial discovery and then a drive to do things and then re-experiencing the shock:

> The first [feeling] was just shock . . . and then all of a sudden it was like, well the practicalities sort of had to kick in. So, what's the next step? And so you really move from that sort of state of shock or disbelief to one of, okay, business, you have to. Once all those phone calls are done then it was just sitting back and again, almost shock. (P393L14-19)

In the following quote Maria described her initial reaction:

> At first you're in shock and it's kind of disbelief . . . can that really be happening. Like I was just there yesterday and, you know, everything was fine and then today it's a whole different situation. . . . (P43L38-P44L1) You don't expect things like that to happen, but they happen. (P44L12-13)

Henry described his initial feelings, which were similar to Maria's and include the element of questioning that Alex discussed:

> I think the initial feeling is more shock and surprise . . . but if something is totally unexpected, like, you don't expect someone to go down to the basement and shoot himself. And equally, you don't expect someone to be thrown from a car and die . . . there's a real element of shock, a real element of surprise and then a real element of, you know, questioning. Why, why, why? (P203L16-23)

In the above statements, shock was often paired with disbelief and or a questioning. Asking why of the situation and not comprehending, or not wanting to comprehend (disbelief) accompanied the shock of hearing the news.

In the murder experiences, the shock is of such a magnitude that the experience moved into the "unreal." It takes on a surreal aspect that is hard to comprehend or as Tony said:

> It was almost like it was easier to deal with it because it was so unrealistic, if that makes any sense?. . . . (P403L35-37) You see this in a movie; this happens in movies or TV dramas, you know, it doesn't happen in real life. So you have this girl who's dead, but you know [pause] for some of them it was just the disbelief, or this being evil, or this happening in this manner was just. . . there's no feeling involved with it because - - because it's just so "out there" in terms of the cause of death. (P404L2-8)

Like the shockwave of an earthquake, the world is re-arranged. The ground is no longer

solid and it takes a moment to find one's footing.

Typical responses included taking a moment to digest the news, having one's feelings, and then going about dealing with the repercussions of the shocking event. For some principals the shock made them lose their confidence and managing the recovery was difficult as their own personal shock was problematic. Still, they managed to take care of their responsibilities to the school but their own recovery was delayed. The principals talked about it as being impossible not to be affected by a death of someone from the school and that emotional reactions are unpredictable. Like buildings after a quake, some will be undamaged, some will have obvious damage and some will have hidden cracks. My impression of principals was that most of them had a high level of quake protection. But not all have this same resiliency. Some of the factors that were mentioned by the participants as affecting their response to the event included: type of event and personal history with that kind of event - both positive and negative. This would include one's experience with death in general and relationship to the deceased. The more personal involvement the principal had the greater the impact of the death. Another factor mentioned was the recency of another death. Some principals had family members die just a few months prior to the CI. This, without a doubt, coloured the principals' internal responses to the CI. A recent family death could be used as a flag for administration to check into see whether more support is needed for that principal.

Sad

Feeling sad was a universal experience for the principals. Interestingly, some principals were more focused on the sadness of others rather than their own experience. Feeling sad, however, could not be escaped as the process of empathizing with others

engendered feelings of sadness within oneself. In the following quote Susan talked about her feelings for the family that was left behind after the death of their mother who was a teacher:

> Great sadness. Sadness more so for her children. She has two very young children. One in kindergarten or grade 1 and the other one is not in school yet. So sadness towards the feelings of these young kids. Sadness for Zeke (her husband) because now he is alone too. (P130L18-22)

Paul also talked about the emotional impact as being "very disheartening and very, very sad that someone die in their youth." (P25L7-8) Allan reflected on his experience with his mother-in-law when talking about sadness and feeling disheartened.

> I mean obviously there's a tremendous amount of sadness on my part, because [clears throat], my wife had just lost her mother to cancer within the last year and a half before that so we'd seen somebody go through um, sort of the final stages of that, and it wasn't a very pleasant experience and I guess that brought back some of those memories. And to see somebody so young having go through it, it was a little disheartening. (P84L25-31)

Like Allan, Alex also felt "down and sad." (P255L28) Tony captured the distinction between everyday day sadness and what the feeling was like for him when he simply called it a "great sadness." (P395L10) Through all the deaths that Mark talked about he constantly mentioned feeling "sad" and "bad" for what happened. (P214L27, P216L22) He also mentioned that there was, for him, no way to escape ones feeling. "You express your sorrow, it kind of overcomes you. You have to go through it." (P222L33-34)

There was a sense that this bad feeling was more complex in that it included overtones of other emotions (e.g., helplessness, depression) not just sadness. Alex expresses the mixture when he said, "I wandered around the school at twilight, just feeling down and sad." It is interesting to note that Mark uses the word "bad" to denote negative feeling states as he is reluctant in the extreme to show emotions in front of

others "I didn't even cry at my own parents funeral," possibly demonstrating the belief that showing emotions, for a man, is indeed a "bad" and not "good" thing to do. Whereas shock is experienced as a difficult emotion to describe, the concept of sadness seemed to be described more simply. Part of this may be due to the universality of the experience such that when one says "I feel sad" most people have an understanding of what that means. If we see tears we assume that sadness is at the root of the tears. After the news of a CI involving a death we expect people to feel sad.

And what is feeling disbelief, shock and great sadness about? It is the death or loss of an individual in our lives. That person was lost to us and this causes us pain. It was not something wanted or expected and leaves a "hollow feeling inside" (Henry, P203L11). Alex described the strength and effect of the experience of loss as:

> . . . the world coming apart. Like it was like a Pandora's Box that opened all the bad things that can . . . kind of had come out in your world. You know your world will never be the same, your school will never be the same. (P255L23-26)

Coming to terms with this loss was important to the healthy functioning of the principal and the school. In a sense, it was the inability to come to terms with loss that led to prolonged suffering and possible dysfunctionality. Having a religion or spirituality was an aide for the principals in finding meaning in the death and accepting the loss. This was evident in both the Catholic schools and in the public system. However, the Catholic system had a more formalized approach that was instituted as policy and was less dependent on the individual beliefs of the public school principals for supporting the school and the principal.

Even though I have separated these emotions of sadness and shock, it was not unusual for them to be thoroughly mixed and happening concurrently. Tony epitomizes

this experience when upon hearing of the death he felt, "everything from disbelief, shock, to great sadness." (P395L10) Ultimately, the principals viewed sadness as a natural feeling to experience upon the death of a member of the school community though the manner of expression varied.

Physical Reactions

Concurrently with the initial emotions of shock and sadness some principals were able to recall physical feelings that they had upon hearing the news of the CI. Paul was very clear on his physical response to the event that he was dealing with:

> I know exactly how I felt, very light headed, very umm, nervous energy. . . I had some anger. . . . (P8L17-18) Just the physical feeling of your stomach, and just the gut-wrenching . . . I knew what my body was feeling and, and my chemistry and all the emotional trauma was, was normal. (P8L28-33)

Bob mentioned the complete lack of feeling he experienced. He felt "a lot of just numbness." (P324L12) Henry, like Paul focused his description in the visceral regions when he said:

> You get that phone call or you get that first notification you know, there's that sort of a hollow feeling inside regardless . . . a hollowness . . . like there's something, something gone. (P203L10-14)

Sherri had to deal with a powerful physical response – the gag reflex – as she administered CPR to her dying student:

> The one thought right in the moment was that when you take CPR they don't tell you how horrible it is (laughter) . . . they kind of skim over it . . . . Cause they had said that "Did you check the air?" Yeah, and I'm getting air in, . . . That was probably the worst part of it. And . . . just being pregnant I wasn't exactly right at the top of wanting to be in something like that either. . . . And you have that - - even doing CPR on somebody else that isn't, isn't your family is kind of a hard. Like, you, you kind of do the "Do I want to do this?" It's like when you're a kid and, and you're supposed to do it at swimming lessons and you're going "I'm not doing it on so and so if I have to put my mouth on them! Blech!" And all that kind of - - and that goes through your head right away and then you

> just kind of go "Oh. This." You know, you have to do it. . . . It was quite revolting at times, that was more the [referring to the vomit] . . . . They're going to all of a sudden go – BLECH – you know. . . . And he wasn't, he wasn't responding at all. So that was, that was hard, it was, you know, you kind of always expect them to come out of it. (P293L24-P294L14)

In the above statements, a broad range of physical response was evident - from numbness to a gut wrenching feeling. When the principals firs heard the news of the death, the initial reaction was a lack of feeling or numbness.

Worry/Concern

Principals manifested their worry and concern in many ways. It could be a heightened attention to the environment, irritability, anger, or physical symptoms (e.g., headaches). Principals have many things to worry about. So many concerns, in fact, that it warranted a separate analysis (see p. 138, Principals' Concerns). Principals' concerns revolved around two fields, logistics and human relations. Logistical issues ranged from confirming the death(s) to organizing an assembly. The human relations issue focused on how to effectively support and care for staff, students and parents.

After the initial reaction, the principals typically would take a moment to get composed and then their concern for their students and staff motivated them into action. Susan, for example, was worried about the effects that the suicide would have on the student population:

> Someone couldn't reach them. Someone didn't see. The biggest fear, especially with a young person with suicide, is often the other kids around. It's always the suicide. They've solved their problems, but they've left problems for other kids. You have to worry about that. (P133L38-P134L3)

Maria described her duties as something that she felt had to be done and how difficult it was for her:

> You feel there are certain things you are obligated to do and I guess that depends, like I mentioned earlier on emotionally how much you can handle too. Like, going, or even speaking to the parents, I always find that very difficult. And in some instances I've been reluctant to do that even though I know I should be doing that. But again, it's just emotionally how hard it can be. And I think probably for the most part I've always been able to come around to it, but like I said, it's very hard. (P44L14-20)

Sherri felt concern for her students and staff. One of her aides "was very emotional with it. . . . and I was concerned for her for quite a while." (P295L9-10) Likewise, with the children she was "kind of concerned . . . they're not used to expressing feelings and they don't really understand feelings . . . so we were quite concerned as to how they were going to react." (P298L35-P299L8)

The above examples demonstrate the concern the principals had for their charges. Further analysis of the human relations side of the principals' concerns and logistics are explored in the theme, Principal's Concerns (see p. 138).

Overwhelm

At this point in the emotional process a divergence emerges. Either the principal was able to put his or her feelings on hold, more or less, or the principal felt the negative effects of becoming "overwhelmed." Other feelings that could accompany being overwhelmed included, helplessness, failure, and feelings of inadequacy. Anger and guilt were often mixed in this soup of negative emotions but anger and guilt could be experienced without feelings of being overwhelmed as well.

For Alex, as the reality starts to set in, the impact begins to register. It was "very, very traumatic at that time. . . . (P244L3) You feel overwhelmed, how, where and what to you do? And where do you start?" (P244L13-14) Also, the negative effects lasted for some time; "I know it bothered me for several years after -- I'd still think about it."

(P246L12) Alex goes on to describe how this particular death, which happened at Easter, affected his holidays and the varied emotions that accompanied the experience:

> I often would think about it and, in the strangest ways. Like, you know, you'd look forward to holidays and holidays would come and you'd feel really happy about it, and then you'd think, but there's still Harry (the student who committed suicide), we lost Harry, and it's kind of like a blemish on your fun, or you felt guilty about having - enjoying yourself. . . there's a certain amount of guilt, there's a certain amount of loss of control, that you couldn't stop this. Uuuummmm, there's just so many emotions tied in with a suicide. . . .The suicide was a very traumatic one, and the emotions there that you go through, it's - you feel helpless. You feel some guilt - could you have stopped it. You feel angry, you feel despair. (P246L13-23)

With all these feelings Alex felt distressed as he tried to manage the outfall of the suicide on the school community:

> I was just feeling bad. . . . (P249L9) And everybody comes to you, "Well what should we do now? What should we do now?" Like, I've never went through this before but they come to you cause you're the principal. . . . I remember that night with my wife, and I kind of broke down and said "You know, people are coming to me asking what do we do now and I don't know what to tell them." And I just, you know, you feel inadequate just about - you feel overwhelmed. (P250L39-P251L3)

Alex goes further and described his feelings about how he found himself alone in the school:

> I remember that night was falling, I didn't even turn out the lights. I wandered around the school at twilight, just feeling down and sad, you know. It did that - your emotions at that time range from here to here. You just bounce around. You just do. And a suicide is sooo hard, cause there's really no answers, you know. There, there's no answers. (P255L26-31)

Maria had a similar experience when she could not impact her CI in a meaningful way. Maria talked about her feelings regarding the two girls that died in a fire and how she had many opportunities to interact with them due to the many problems the parents had in effectively managing the upbringing of the girls.

> And then when something like that happens, I guess you in some ways - there's almost a feeling of failure. . . I tried so hard to change, to make or create change for these girls, but that never happened. . . . You don't always have control over that; you can only do so much. (P44L27-31)

One of the more distressing feelings that principals experienced was that of helplessness. Naturally, being in a position in which one exerts authority and makes decisions, feeling helpless was not a state that the principal would allow themselves to stay in for long. This feeling usually occurred when first hearing about the death and was mixed in with other emotions such as sadness, shock, and disbelief. If this feeling was not overcome or put aside the principal's effectiveness was compromised, even if only temporarily. One way to integrate this feeling that was mentioned by a number of principals was to accept the finality of death and its irrevocable nature. Many principals relied on their religious or spiritual beliefs to bring a perspective to the event which aided them to come to acceptance of the death(s). Additionally, being proactive by making decisions and dealing with the CI gave the principal focus. Doing was not only necessary but helpful for the principal. He or she felt more effective, connected, and helpful thereby diminishing the feeling of helplessness.

Having a difficult time coping with one's emotions and feelings of helplessness, naturally led to stress. Stress was not limited, however, to those principals having difficulty. It went hand-in-glove with the CI and all principals claimed that they felt stress. The stress could have been due to conflict with head office, managing the staff's reactions, coordinating follow-up events on short timelines or any of a myriad of possibilities.

Anger

Division office could not only cause stress but feelings of extreme anger and

resentment. Paul, Mark, and Allan all experienced problems with Division, which typically revolved around school closures and not offering support or acknowledgment of the recent crisis. Paul's most intense feelings are probably reserved for his superiors who failed to offer any support:

> My own director and two superintendents, neither of them came to my building or called . . . I think I coped through a bit of anger there and "Those bastards!!" was sort of what was in the back of my head, so. . . . (P12L6-9) Not ONE person came over and reached out to me and said "Paul, do you need any help?. . . . How are yeah?". . . . It filled me with anger. (P9L19-20)

Feeling of frustration could also be brought on by the principal's experience with the deceased. Henry, with his counsellor, spent many months working with a student that was sick with anorexia. The student died suddenly of a heart attack.

> There was a - just a huge sense of frustration. You know, real, real frustration at that one. . . . It's not like the drinking . . . where you go out and you get blasted, you know, and you make a mistake driving home. You know that sort of thing? This is a slow, looooooong process. It's not that suddenness. . . . I think in some ways that makes it a little bit more difficult to accept. Because you invested a large amount of time. You really do feel a sense of loss there. And you question, like, why? What, what else could I, what else could I do? (P186L34-P187L8)

For the most part, feelings of anger were most prominent in principals who had negative experiences with their Division office. These feeling of anger were intense, long lasting and resulted in a negative view of division office. I cannot adequately convey the depth of these feeling that three of the principals felt other than to say that there was bitterness, disgust, and a level of anger that seemed undiminished from the moment when the event occurred many years previously. These feelings were one of the few negative outcomes for principals managing a CI.

Anger also occurred in the aftermath of a suicide or a senseless death. Some

principals felt angry at the deceased for having put them through the pain of the process. This would then lead to feeling guilty at having such feelings.

Stress

The CI is inherently stressful and feelings of anger only add to the principals' stress level. Another stressor that emerged was the principal's experience or lack thereof. Allan talked about this issue:

> This was stressful. This was stressful cause I hadn't done this before and every situation is going to be different . . . and you don't really know what, what to do. You're not sure whether what you do will be interpreted as the right thing to do . . . the fishbowl effect. I mean, everybody in the community is watching you . . . so, if you make a mistake on this one, when it involves the death of one of the children in the community, somebody's going to let you know about it. You probably won't hear about it right away, because people are going to want the funeral and everything to get over with, but somewhere down the road if you didn't handle it right, you're going to hear about it. And, so there is that added pressure that whatever it is that you do, you'll want to do the right thing. And the question is "Is there a right or a wrong answer to some of the things that you do?" (P92L27-P93L6)

Stress could also occur long after the event. Alex noticed some behavioural changes in his dealings with tragic events.

> I just about avoided anything to do to talk about tragic events, to even go back to it, let's set up another team, let's revisit it. I do it but I really don't want to cause it was just too painful. It reminded me of too awful a thing - you know. I wasn't really gung ho to say "Yup. Let's set up another team, let's be ready!". . . . I wanted to go back to teaching and coaching and things that I thought school would be like. I've gotten by that now, but for many years I, I didn't really want to get into that again, you know? It was just too painful. Just too many memories from it. (P251L19-26)

The biggest stressors for Bob was addressing the congregation at the funerals and speaking to the students at assembly:

> Probably all the speaking; I guess that assembly, speaking at a Saturday function that we had – I think those would be the toughest two. Cause you're kind of on stage, per se. (P352L13-15)

The principal, as the leader of the school, is front and center during regular operations and during a CI takes on the enhanced responsibility of guiding the school through a crisis. All stakeholders are looking to the principal for leadership. He or she is indeed on stage and must manage the stress brought on by his or her own response to the event, anger at the lack of support from head office, and working in the public eye whether at an assembly, wake, or funeral.

Guilt

Guilt was one of the lesser emotions discussed in the interviews but a powerful one nevertheless. It usually occurred in the presence of a suicide but not always. For example, there were two incidents when teachers died (not suicide) who had contentious relationships with other teachers. Upon the teacher's death the principal had to deal with the guilt of the unresolved feeling of the surviving teachers. Another example of survivor guilt occurred after the funeral when a principal was to go on holiday and felt guilty about "enjoying" himself so soon after the death.

As with other emotive states, guilt was often associated with other feelings. Alex expressed this well when he said: "There's a sense of guilt, there's a sense of helplessness, there's a sense of 'What could I have done differently?' You know, there's all kinds of soul searching until you're able to realize that well...there wasn't much you could have done differently, if anything. And you're not to blame."

Catharsis

The funeral is where most principals allowed some visible expression or letting go of their feelings. There was the sense that the immediate crisis was over and it was an appropriate time and place. Like most principals, Susan controlled the display of her

feelings until the funeral when she felt that she could finally express herself:

> But I think of every funeral or every incident, the breaking down comes at the actual funeral . . . I could be focused on doing something for others, but when the funeral came - not the focus, but you know I could, for, for myself – but when the funeral came it was no longer in my hands, it was out. And then it was 'Now it's time!' And maybe because that was the right, appropriate place. I didn't have to worry about helping anybody else, I could just - it was my time. And not even 'appropriate', because I really don't care - I'll cry wherever I want to cry! But it was - it's done. (P164L24-32)

For Alex the funeral was, "very emotional" (P250L9) as it was for Allan:

> It was at the end of the memorial service and there was about four of Shauna's friends that were singing *We Will Remember You*, by Sarah McLaughlin and I guess it was the first time that I kind of let some emotions out. (P88L23-26)

Some principals were surprised at the positive feeling experienced at the funeral. Bob felt an unexpected emotion of pride in the way the students had responded:

> And they (the students) sang at two funerals for sure . . . I was pretty impressed. That was one of the things emotionally, when I went to the first funeral, I probably hadn't even shed a tear up until then. The first funeral and I seen, I heard the kids sing, there were tears – you know, more of pride, of the kids being able to do that type of thing. And I was pretty impressed with, that they could actually do that, cause that's their peers. And, it was good. . . . (P337L30-36) A lot of – believe it or not – pride, as an emotion. That kind of stuck through – pride and joy, believe it or not, most of the week. (P341L12-13)

Bob was also impressed with the parents:

> The strength of some of the parents. A couple of them were just incredible. Like, it was unbelievable that they could actually speak about their child at the funeral, those types of things. You know, the strength of some of the parents I think was another emotion . . . . (P341L20-24) They were amazingly positive. I don't how they could be that positive. Absolutely positive. . . .(P331L25-26) Inspiring! (P341L26)

The expression of emotion was not restricted to the funerary experience. Tony, in the death of his colleague, allowed himself to emote while talking to students and staff and

found this to be liberating. Cathartic release could also happen in private with their spouses. Alex, Maria and Sherri talked about this:

> So my husband is probably the only one that ever sees the, backlash of it. (Sherri – P295L15-16)

> I remember that night with my wife, and I kind of broke down (Alex – P250L42-251L1)

> My wife and I would sit and talk about it. I guess that's where I would sort of debrief for the day and . . . let your feelings out (Allan – P84L23-25)

Sherri explained how immediately after the incident she was "really emotional" (P290L22) and then goes on to explain mitigating circumstances that she believes affected her response to the CI:

> Initially, there was a lot of crying and I was upset . . . If it would have happened at a different time in MY life . . . I would've probably behaved differently. . . . I had lost my Dad in August, and as horrible as it was-- I had such a horrible time dealing with that and then this. I had already kind of shut myself down from things. I think I was already on the automatic motion, so I just stayed on that. Other than the initial -- like the first night was quite emotional. (P295L21, 26-32)

As indicated above, the cathartic experience could range from feeling of deep sadness to feeling of awe and inspiration. Typically, when emotional expression occurred it happened in the home with one's spouse, at staff meetings and at the funeral.

Tired

Fatigue is a challenge that the principal must contend with from the moment of hearing about the CI until the funeral is over. The stress of the event combined with long hours and little sleep leaves its mark. Alex talked about how he felt immediately following the funeral. He felt,

> so tired and I just - you know you wonder - I was just fatigued for about a week. I could sleep. I'd go to bed or try to go bed early and I'd sleep and I'd wake up and I was tired. . . . (P273L15-18) I guess emotionally drained. (L21)

By week's end Allan "felt very tired" (P114L10) as well. During the process of managing the CI Tony noticed some physiological responses and the resultant effects:

> I would have headaches. Whether that was stress related or whether it was just a combination of things is hard to say. This is a pretty demanding job at the easiest of times and so when you have those other factors coming into it, it becomes - you do get tired. (P372L18-21)

Bob had to attend four funerals in one week and this was tiring emotionally and physically:

> And then you'd have a break for a few hours and then have to prepare for the next funeral . . . be up and down. Although my downs, like personally, my downs never go that deep. You know, you just kind of dive down just a little below, and then start building to the next one. Saturday about twelve – relief. Just – whew! I slept all afternoon. I mean, I was physically tired – physically. . . . you're getting about six hours of sleep maybe a night, and I need lots of sleep. Physically drained, and so that weekend I didn't want to do anything that required more than one brain cell. [laughter] I think I planted potatoes! That would be about it. (P347L6-14)

This fatigue and emotional exhaustion stemmed from many sources and included: lack of sleep, stress, the emotional nature of the event, and the duration of the process which could last up to a couple of weeks due to multiple deaths, court case or the recovery and re-integration of survivors of a fatal accident.

The quotes from the transcripts indicate that the experience of managing a CI is exhausting both emotionally and physically. There are numerous tasks that need to be fulfilled under an intensely emotional and draining gestalt. The stress levels are high, the expectations on self are high, and the possibility for offending someone are high. Furthermore, the ultimate responsibility lies on one person's shoulders - the principal. During a CI the principal is usually the first one in the school and the last to leave. He or she typically gave a speech at the school and or delivered the eulogy. The principal was

concerned for staff, students, and for the parents who had lost a child. The last concern usually precipitated meetings and phone calls to the parents. Often the principal would visit the family, attend the wake and then the funeral. In the school, Tony visited each class that the teacher taught in and was involved with the sharing process. There were many other functions that kept the principal on the go throughout this event including; dealing with administration, managing the media, supporting staff, and coping with one's own response to the CI.

Relief

The principals talked about how tiring managing a critical incident was and how much relief they felt when it was over. Allan felt "very emotionally drained" (P114L11-12) and a sense of "relief" (P92L4) that the week was over. "It was almost like this huge weight had been lifted from your shoulders cause, hey, its, its, its over, It's done, we've done a good job, the kids feel supported." (P91L22-23)

For Bob once the assemblies were over there was a feeling of "quick relief then on to the next task." (P353L21) Quite often, once the funerals were over, it was a holiday and having this break was helpful for all in the recovery process. As Bob said:

> Then we had summer holidays. And just like somebody had a big balloon and went POP! And [laughter] it's all gone, you come back in the fall and there was a little bit, just very minimal, that I found - just to deal with it. Watch a few kids and see how kids reacted and staff like that. But it was just like – BOOM! It just evaporated. (P353L29-P354L3)

Relief seems to be a natural outcome after a stressful and tiring event is successfully completed. Of course, if the event was not managed successfully, in the principal's mind, anxiety might be the outcome instead of relief.

Summary and Further Analysis of Emotions

The themes that emerged from the data included: emotion, concerns, internal support, external support, principal's strengths, leadership, learning, and advice. It is interesting that death itself was not a theme. It is not that it was not discussed but death itself was not the focus of the interviews. Death permeated the interview and was the context within which the interview occurred. After all, the principals' emotional reactions to managing a CI involving death were the focus of the interview. Death was never more than a sentence away in our conversations whether we were talking about the incident itself, the funeral, or the repercussions of the death on the school community. Likewise, as mentioned earlier, death was not explored in the literature review, as the focus of the study was on the principal's response to a CI and how it affected his or her emotional state and ability to lead the school.

Concerning emotional states, a number of principals talked about how their emotions ranged dramatically throughout the CI moving from deep grief to feelings of pride and awe for example. This roller-coaster ride was unanticipated and a cause of concern for some and tiring for all. Allan found that the funerals elicited an emotional yo-yo effect:

> Funerals, you just go up and down, up and down, up and down, up and down, up and down (P342L3-4). . . . (then) Probably a lot of just - numbness again. (P324L12)

Tony mentioned that, "whether you're an administrator or teacher when you have a child die it's something that will stay with you for, for the rest of your life." (P369L28-30) Furthermore, he talked about the importance of being able to "deal with those emotions and . . . feelings" (P397L5) and if you do "it's going to help you get through it and you

carry on." (P397L6-7). Henry shared his thoughts about the degree of emotional impact as being related to the degree of intimacy with that individual.

> The closeness with the person that was involved has . . . an impact . . . what you tried to do for that person before the event does have some impact on your direct emotional involvement. (P186L10-14)

The experience of being enveloped with and managing a CI, according to the principals, is a powerful experience whether positive or negative. The event, for the most part, is unexpected, tragic, and full of sorrow. There appears to be a general sequence or order of emotions and when the event is first brought to the principal's attention, there is shock (even when the death is predicted as in a death by cancer). This is swiftly followed by feelings of sadness, not only for oneself, but also for the family of the deceased. Some principals were able to identify their physical responses, which ranged from a hollow feeling in the stomach, headaches, and anxiety. All the principals had some degree of worry or concern for their charges. Whether it was how the death would affect the students and staff or how they (the principal) would carry out their duty and how the public would see their performance.

The majority of principals had, at some time or other, a feeling of strong anxiety approaching the feeling of being overwhelmed. This was usually a temporary situation and overcome. However, for a minority of principals the feeling lasted longer and interfered, not so much with the execution of their duties, but in their emotional recovery from the incident. Anger was most strongly reserved for those principals who had negative experiences with head office but also was seen in the principals response to the senselessness of a death whether by a car accident or by a suicide.

All the principals found the CI a stressful event. Typically, emotional release or

catharsis occurred at the funeral. Sometimes it happened prior to the funeral in the presence of a major support person (e.g., spouse). Sometimes emotional release occurred in front of staff and students. The process of managing a CI was tiring for all and at the end of the process there was a sense of relief. For a few principals there was ongoing anxiety if the event was not fully integrated into their psyche in a healthy manner.

An interesting dichotomy emerged between my experience of the interviews and then reading the transcripts regarding emotion. During the interviews, with a couple of exceptions, it seemed that the principals tried to avoid exploring their emotional responses to the CI under discussion. However, the transcriptions revealed considerably more talk about emotion than I was aware of at the time of the interview. Even though the principals may have avoided the exploration initially, somehow their relationship to their emotions emerged through the course of the interview. This was fortuitous as the working title was *The Emotional Experience of Leaders Managing Critical Incidents* and I was concerned that I might have to change the title as it seemed that I was not getting enough information about the emotional component of the principals' response. Reviewing the transcripts and the themes it became clear that emotions were substantive components of all facets of the discussion. Whether the principals talked about students, parents, teachers, communication, or central office, emotion was woven into the text. So, in the end, this did become a study about emotions and leaders managing CIs.

In a sense, how could this study not include emotion? We are looking at the death of students, teachers and other community members. The experience of death, especially of young people, is considered a difficult process for adults (Rashotte, Fothergill-Bourbonnais, & Chamberlain, 1997). Managing a CI is difficult on two levels: one,

emotionally, and two, organizationally. Organizationally it is difficult typically due to lack of CI preparedness, the complexity and amount of co-ordination, and cooperation needed between the stakeholders, time pressure and the emotional intensity of the situation. Emotionally it was difficult for the principal as he or she had to manage their own emotional response to the event, the emotions of the students and staff and the pressure and stress that came with being the leader of the school. The principals also had to set an example by leading the way when potential disaster is only one misstep away.

There were four affective or feeling states that were universal to all participants. They were: shock, a sense of loss, sadness, and being tired. The first three states occur almost simultaneously with shock coming first at hearing the news followed by a sense of loss which led to sadness. Tiredness could occur at any time in the process though it was most often recognized after the funeral(s). Feeling tired has a large physical component but also includes the mental and emotional aspect. The principal was tired physically, emotionally and even spiritually. The system is taxed and depleted *in toto*. The feeling of loss is the most complex state to describe. One principal talked about a "hollowness" that he felt; as if something had been cut out of him.

Helplessness was felt by most principals at some time and especially so for those going through a suicide or murder. Along with the suicides was the feeling of guilt. Anger was mainly reserved for the principals who were not supported by their district offices, directors and superintendents. Anger was also experienced by a number of principals and was directed toward two sources - the deceased and district office personnel. In both cases there was a sense of victimization – how could the deceased have done this 'stupid thing" (e.g., car accident) or senseless action (e.g., suicide) or put

me through these difficult emotions after I spent so much time trying to help that person. The same with the director or superintendent – how could they do such a stupid thing or not take the time to check on us.

Not only were there a wide variety of emotions experienced but what struck the participants was the *intensity* of the emotional experience. This was apparent at the time of the CI and for many in the re-telling of the story. Two principals broke down during the interviews. Many forgot previous incidents during the first interview and recalled them in the second interview. The general feeling was that the experience was irrevocably etched into one's memory and as Tony said, "those two I remember those as clear as day" (P383L19) and Susan stated numerous times how she can "never forget" (P141L3) her experiences with the deaths of students and staff.

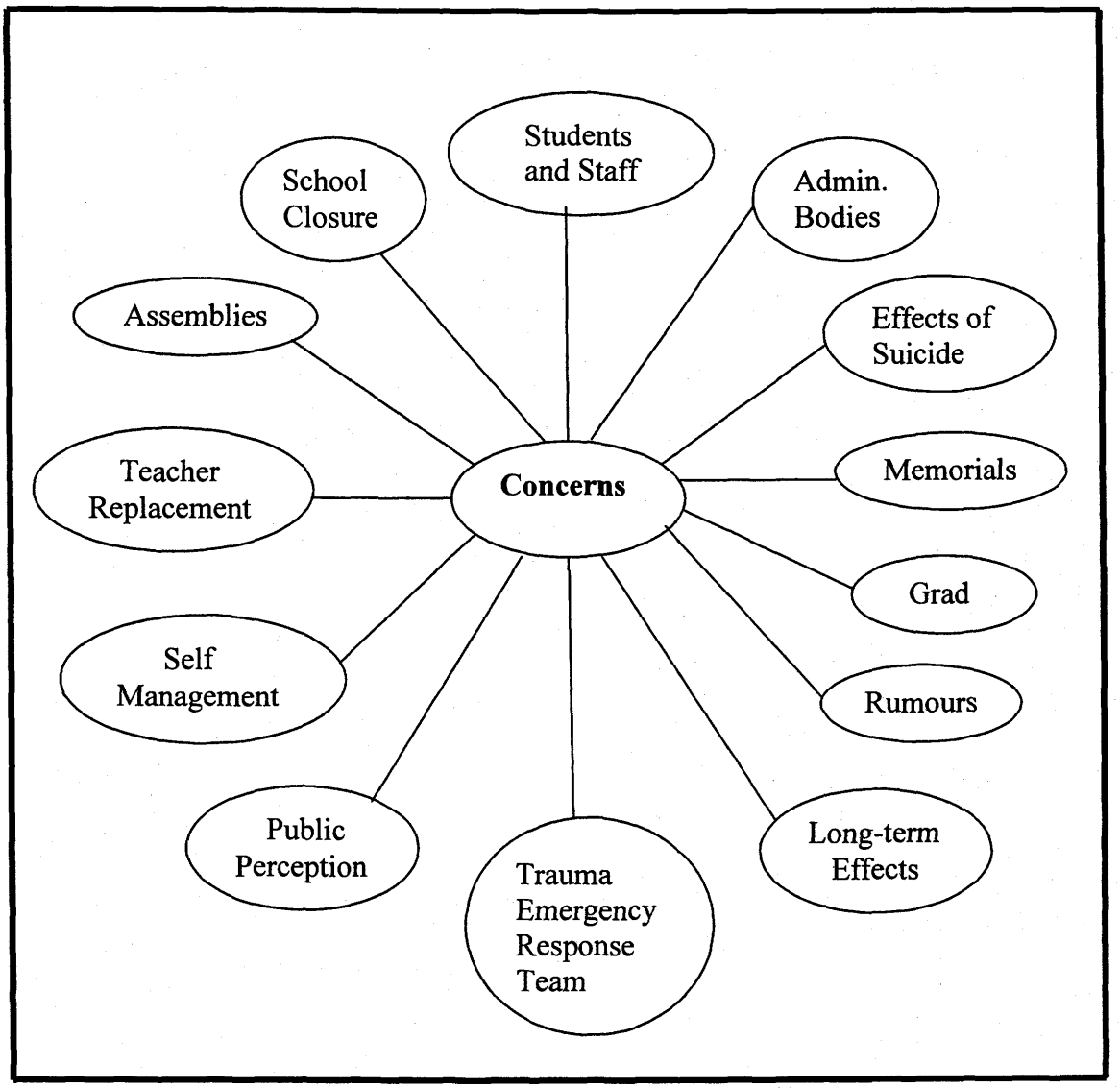
Concerns

Concerns or worries the principals had revolved around the effective running of the school during a time of crisis and are depicted in figure 5.3. Typical concerns included managing rumours, the effect of suicide on other students, school closure, memorials for the dead student, liaising with central office staff, effects of the death on siblings, substitute teachers (if a teacher died), and long-term effects of a CI on the student population. These concerns were apart from what I would call the "normal" worries of the principal for the well being of staff and students during a CI. The concerns elicited worry and stress and issues with head office brought up feelings of intense anger that lingered on for years.

The following concerns are examined individually: students and staff, rumours, self-management, Administrative bodies, school closure, assemblies, wakes and funerals,

effects of suicide on students, appropriateness of memorials, graduation, long term effects of the CI, public perception, Trauma Emergency Response Team (TERT), and teacher replacement.

Figure 5.3 Elements of Principals' Concerns



Students and staff

The principals' main concern was the effects on the students and staff from the CI. Once the staff had been apprised of the facts, supported emotionally, and re-focused

then the students could be looked after. Sometimes unexpected incidents occurred that left people with hurt feelings. This is what happened to Susan when she had to take away the assembly speech from a staff member that was to talk about a student's death by suicide. The person writing the speech came up with an inappropriate lecture and someone else was assigned to redo it. "Our assistant principal began to rewrite it, and she went wild (the original writer), which caused a tremendous rift for the rest of the year." (P135L31-32) Susan stated that she felt that the best decision was made and unfortunately there were negative outcomes regarding the relationship with that staff person.

Another example that Susan brought up was a communication problem with a teacher in which the death of a parent was sent out in an internal memo before the teacher was informed personally that the father of one of the students had died. Susan took responsibility for this oversight. "We screwed up - we were the first ones to admit it!" (P173L13) The teacher was highly agitated over the incident and this caused a great deal of concern for Susan.

As with most principals, Susan's main concern was with "staff and kids." (P129L29) Something that took Susan by surprise was how a suicide brought up past experiences of suicide for staff members and the strength of their reactions. "When they relived friends of theirs who had committed suicide. It was amazing that I had never seen that before." (P134L15-16) This type of incident has made Susan more aware of important staff anniversaries and personal histories regarding death.

The main concern that Susan identified in managing the CI "and the biggest mistake I think we made - we make, I know this sounds odd, is not showing that it does bother us." (P172L23-25) Being proficient carries the risk of appearing without feelings or

emotion. This goes counter to representing an institution that cares. Susan was concerned how this appearance affected the students and staff.

A concern that Alex had was dealing with a child with severe MS who eventually died. Managing a person with extreme physical disability put pressure on Alex and the staff. "We're nervous too . . . there was (sic) lots of times the staff felt she was sent to school when she shouldn't be." (P261L8-10) This was an ongoing stress for both the students and staff, which Alex often thought about.

Sherri's main concerns were her staff and students: "I know my aide was having a hard time. She was very emotional with it and I was concerned for her for quite a while." (P295L19-11) Sherri was also concerned with the unusual response from the students:

> We were kind of concerned with the kids because they're not used to expressing feelings and they don't really understand feelings. (P298L35-P299L1)

The crisis management concerns boil down to worry about the effects of one's decisions on staff and students. Principals wanted staff and students to be given accurate information, support them emotionally, and were aware of long-term consequences of sustained stress. Principals also talked about how important it was to avoid miscommunication and the negative effects when this happened.

Rumours

Another issue that came up for many principals was the importance of putting a quick stop to rumors or potential rumors. Dealing with rumors was a concern that Maria mentioned repeatedly and the need to make "sure that it was the correct information." (P39L4) Her method in accomplishing this was by:

> Talking to the parents. Finding out, you know, what happened, when it happened; because a lot of rumors come out of an incident like that. . . .

> (P40L29-30) Just basically informing them that, you know, the situation, sort of clarifying so that a lot of rumors wouldn't be going around; so that they would know exactly what they were dealing with. If students came in with questions, then they were kind of to be prepared to do that; to discuss it with the students. (P40L24-27)

Discussing another incident Maria again talked about rumors and they get going:

> And we had a 15-year-old student who umm shot himself . . . it happened over night, or in the wee hours of the morning, so first thing is you hear rumours. You know, like "Did you hear about this? Did you know?" And I guess just basically try to get to the people again to find out the facts because the students are always coming with different stories "I heard this. I heard that." Not even just the students but the staff itself . . . you hear all kinds of stories. So you want to talk to someone who basically can give you sort of the facts. (P45L18-26)

This strong desire to get the information from the source, to be consistent in relaying the facts, and the danger of rumors, was further supported by comments from Henry and Alex.

> We always wanted to make sure that everyone got the same message. You know, because at times like this, you know, rumors are rampant. (Henry, P191L12-14)

> Misinformation can just cause rumors and, you know, things that just aren't that pleasant. (Alex, P278L12-13)

All the principals in the interviews were aware of the dangers of rumors and were constantly monitoring the flow of information and misinformation.

Self-management

Self-management refers to the principals' concern for managing their reactions, both behavioural and emotional, in response to a CI. Alex's main concern was managing his emotional response to his first and most traumatic death (a suicide).

> That was very, very traumatic at that time. . . . (P244L3) but suddenly, you know you feel overwhelmed, how, where and what to you do? And where do you start? . . . . (L13-14) The load was so heavy on my shoulders at that time, simply because you were principal. . . . (P246L3-4) People are coming to me asking what do we do now and I don't know what to tell them.

(P251L1-2)

Alex's other concern is managing the feelings that come up during the anniversary of the first death that he experienced in the school. "Every year on Good Friday or April 1st I always send flowers to Simon and Sue (the parents) from the school . . . I never miss." (P258L1-2)

During the first interview Tony mentioned that one of his worries would be how to deal with the death of a colleague. This turned out to be a prophetic musing on his part as his worry did indeed come true:

> And you know it's interesting, I was re-reading through the transcript just the other day in preparation for our meeting . . . And I think I made a comment, "It would be different if it was a staff member." And then all of a sudden I'm thinking, well, you know, it was. You know, am I psychic or what?!. . . - the staff member that died - you know, that was very, very difficult as well, too. And I think in both - in that case definitely it was more difficult than the two students because of that closer, more personal connection with that staff member. And it was also difficult because to see how the other staff members reacted to it. (P387L9-25)

Maria had great difficulty talking to the parents of the deceased. "So that was very hard to do; . . . to have to talk to a parent after they'd just lost their child. That's very, very emotional and very hard to do." (P39L4-6) Deciding to go to the wake was also problematic:

> I found it very hard - like I was saying, to talk to the parents and then when they were going through the wake process and stuff like that - um - it was hard for me to make myself go to the wake and I didn't actually go to the wake of those two girls - I - I just went to the funeral services afterwards. (P58L14-18)

For those principals who had difficulty managing their emotional experience, and to a lesser degree for those that did not, there are two aspects to this concern or issue; one, coping with one's response and two, interacting with others, especially the parents of the deceased.

Administrative bodies

Lack of concern and support from superintendents, directors, central office, as well as the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (in some cases) evoked strong feelings of anger. These feelings were readily apparent many years after the fact. The unfortunate part of this is that, as the principals themselves said, it could have been remedied by a phone call. That was all that the principal wanted.

Paul's major concern and he feels strongly about it, was his lack of relationship with and support from central office. Paul described it best:

> Not ONE person came over and reached out to me and said "Paul, do you need any help?. . . . How are yah?" And it got - it filled me with anger. So I carried that cross for a day or two and, and then we wanted to close the school, because her service was Friday. So how do any of us function as teachers and teacher assistants and caretakers and, and all the kids! Like, how do we have school Friday? Well my boss said "No. The school shall be open." So (pause) anger again. And then the board chairman intervened and said, "We're closing this school [pause - very quietly]. What are you thinking? These people are, are hanging, by a thread - and we're closing this school. There's no school." (P9L19-28)

Allan regretted the lack of support by his Director and suggested a solution:

> My disappointments through this whole process . . . my director of education never stepped into the school in the entire week. . . . (P100L27-29) The support that we actually got from our central office was almost zero . . . it should be an important part of their role. Even if that support is just phoning us up once a day and saying "How are things going?" (L34-38)

Mark had concerns about interference from central office regarding funeral attendance:

> Some people can be pretty hard in central office. As I mentioned it in the last interview the secretary-treasurer who carried a great deal of weight, wielded a great deal power in central office, probably equal to the director at least, he phoned me himself. That's not his job to phone me. That's the director's job. He called me and told me that I couldn't allow my staff to attend the funeral. Because the mother of this young man who was killed and we don't owe her anything. (P231L29-35)

Bob was not impressed with the lack of support from the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF):

> The STF did not give us any support. We felt really left out. They did not send any of their counsellors. . . . A couple staff members were really upset after the fact, not so much during, but they felt they should've come here because a magnitude of that disaster . . . they really felt that they should've had better support. (P336L31-37)

In the examples above, it was apparent the depth of feelings that were evoked when a lack of support is demonstrated coming from the top of the organization. These feeling were immediate and long lasting.

School closure?

School closure was a constant issue that came up in the interviews. This issue was intertwined with dealing with division office as the principal and local board would often have a divergent opinions - principals wanting to close school, division office wanting to keep it open. Maria discussed some of the issues that school closure presented in her community.

> Through the band and the education system there were discussions as to how we were going to handle whether there would be school closures for the funerals . . . we did some decision-making and ultimately we ended up - - we closed the school down two afternoons. And again, there were a lot of mixed feelings about that. (P35L23-27)

> Some of the things that were of concern were the fact that when we close the school down, sometimes the families and the homes are not able to deal with the students so they're sort of off on their own. So there were feelings that the school should be open; the counsellors would be available. And again, those students who felt it necessary to talk to someone, there would be someone there. And if they felt the need to approach someone then at least that would be available to them. (P35L30-36)

Maria, after her first experience, decided to keep the school open for those students not going to the funeral. This choice was used by of other principals as well. In

some rural schools the whole community was at the funeral and the school was closed even if central office disagreed. As mentioned previously Paul had to bargain with his director to allow the school to be closed.

Mark had similar problems with the central office in one of his deaths:

> Interestingly enough I really am a bit ashamed to say not everybody in my central office saw it like I did. They didn't think that the entire staff should go but what I had done is I gave everyone permission. It's one of these moral imperatives transcends the bureaucratic straight authority line. Sometimes you have to make choices to do what you think is the right thing and it would have been the wrong thing to disallow anyone to go to that funeral. (P214L34-39)

This issue is intricately tied to problems with head office that was apparent in the previous heading. Principals interpreted the school closure issue as an extension of the lack of support by directors and superintendents. Even though closing the school was appropriate in most situations, keeping it open also had benefits in some of the larger schools. In these schools students who did not have adequate support systems could come to the school and if programs were in place, take advantage of the support offered.

Assemblies, wakes, and funeral services

Assemblies, wakes, and funeral services caused considerable consternation among the principles even when there were no disagreements (concerning school closure) with central office. Most often there was disagreement between community members or between principal and staff as to what was appropriate. Students often assisted during this time coming up with valuable suggestions. Not only was there the issue of what to do but who would be allowed to attend. Henry talked about the questions that faced him when he said:

> What's going to happen? You know, funeral. . . do you want 300 kids in the church? You know, would you prefer us to keep them back here? If

> we keep them back here, what would you like us to do? Do you want us, you know, do you want us to do a memorial thing? Would you prefer things go ahead, you know, as much as normal? (P190L20-25)

Maria raised similar concerns that occurred within her school:

> There was discussion about that. And again, because they came up with the option of attending, actually attending the funeral services, we didn't do a service within the school itself. There was a lot of discussion about that and I think when we get more into the second incident that happened more recently things changed. Like you look at what you've done and you think, "Well maybe we could've done this. Or maybe we should've." And you have to back track and look at the reasons why you came up with that. And at that point we just left it at attending the funeral services if they chose to. (P40L1-8)

The second time around Maria changed her strategy and even though anyone could go to the funeral that wanted, she kept the school open:

> We didn't close the school down. We kept it open; like we left it open for staff members and students who wanted to go and participate with the funeral services. We had that open as an option where certain staff members took students to the funeral. There were a group of students who got together with a couple of teachers and they had their, their time to write stories to the students, or write a letter to the students. Sort of a more . . . individualized grieving where they could participate in that. So that was an option for them. That was kind of there the first time, but I think that because the decision had been made at that time to close the school down, I think that's where...in a way it closed some of the options for the students. Because then they were sort of sent out and they had to deal with it more or less on their own at that point. So the second time around I think . . . in a way it was somewhat better . . . and again, being open all the time so that the students who really needed someone to talk to or they needed to be referred elsewhere then there were people here who could assist them with that. (P46L5-27)

Alex directly appealed to his staff on this issue:

> I had a few staff in here with me in the morning I said: "I - guys - give me some input here." That's where we got the memorial service idea from one of the TA's - Wouldn't that be a good idea to have that at school. Take some of the pressure off the ones that are doing that in the community and also be nice for the kids. (P279L6-10)

Allan had to decide what to do when the students wanted some input into the process:

> We had a group of girls who wanted to organize a memorial service just at the school, just, just for the kids at the school. . . . A couple of staff members said "Ach - we're so busy! Is there any way we can do this after we come back in the New Year?" But really, if you think about it, you've got the funeral, which was going to be on the 22nd, and then you're going to want to wait two weeks or three weeks and then have a memorial service, which is going to get all of these emotions and these feelings with these kids going all over again. Let's try to do it at the same time, in the same time frame, or, it's going to be a rush - but let's do it. And then when we come back in the new year, we can maybe just try and move on, so, so, we supported them in that endeavour, and we allowed them to involve the family and the family, umm, came to the school with all the relatives, and they had brought pictures and possessions and we had about a 45 minute to an hour memorial service at the school and, again, the, I think the kids felt really supported in organizing it and it was very well attended. (P76L16-23)

Allan talked about divergent opinions and the importance of not forcing compliance:

> We most certainly had parents who did not agree with us having a memorial service at the school. However, when . . . they found out that their children were not going to be forced to go to this, I mean they had the option of staying in their classrooms or going to the library, or doing whatever - then they could accept it. (P93L14-18)

In the preceding, the concern for principals regarding the funerals is organizational in nature. What are we going to do and how are we going to do it are the main concerns? Also, there was a developmental process that occurred with the principals; as experience was acquired the organizational aspect of concern lessened and a willingness to encourage and accept help from the school community (teachers, students, and parents) increased. As principals gained confidence in themselves they were able to demonstrate flexibility, for example, instead of closing the school, keeping it open but allowing whomever wanted to attend the funeral permission to go. Also, as pointed out by Maria, there are some advantages to keeping the school open - - support for students that might not otherwise receive it.

Effects of suicide on students

Suicide is an area of growing concern as prevalence rates since 1960 have tripled (Klicker, 2000). In the schools that experienced a suicide in this study, the principal was concerned with the effects such an event would have on the staff and student body. Maria explained some of the issues that confronted her. Maria was the principal at the band school with numerous tragic deaths every year, both in the school and in the community. Suicide was not uncommon and presented her with the challenge of supporting and protecting students on a regular basis:

> I guess probably just the students that may feel so emotional about it that, you know, they think, "I've lost my friend. I really wish I could be with him." You know, that type of thing; that scenario. You have to be really ready and prepared to be able to identify the students that need the extra counselling or who need to be referred. And you always have to watch for those quiet ones; the ones that don't want to participate in it, they don't want to talk about it, you know. And you're always looking at what, you know, what can we be doing for those students. Making sure that nothing just suddenly happens with someone else. And for the older students, like other things that I've been thinking about in terms of we don't right now have a formal existing like peer, peer counsellors, but those are things that . . . I've always thought about. We need to be able to establish peer counsellors within the school. We need to have people available for the other students to talk to at their own age level. And then, making sure you have, again, things in place so that the demand on the peer counsellors isn't too overwhelming for them. You have to have the support in place for everybody. (P49L27-P50L3)

Maria brought up a number of her concerns about the effects of suicide in her school. She is concerned about the copy-cat phenomenon – how one death leads others to consider suicide for themselves. Maria is aware of the need to watch out for the quiet ones and identifying at risk students. Maria then looked to the future and establishing a peer-to-peer system where children can talk to their peers for support. This idea is supported in the literature as "only one-quarter of teens who know of a suicidal peer report this to an

adult" (Ryerson & Kalafat, 2002, p. 92). Finally, always concerned for her students, she said that the peer counsellors themselves would need to be supported. This concern pointed to Maria's understanding of *vicarious trauma* and the need to support people who are engaged in this kind of activity (see Johnson, 2000).

Susan discussed how the suicide affected the staff in an unexpected manner:

> We had more difficulty with the young boy who committed suicide because our staff members relived close friends of theirs who had committed suicide. It was pretty tough on those people. . . . (P129L8-10) It always amazes me the effect on others because there's always the unfinished business. And with this young person who had committed suicide, the effect by other staff members, they didn't know the kid. But it was past life experiences of suicide that you didn't, why would you discuss it. I mean, why would you know that someone 25 years ago, whatever, in their life had killed themselves. But it always comes to the surface. And then you go – whoops, now what? We're just dealing with this one and now I've got peripheral ones that have nothing to do with it but everything to do with it. And, you know, that's where the difficulty was. (P160L18-26)

Susan discovered that when managing a suicide there are not only the immediate responses by the students and staff to that death, but secondary issues that surfaced concerning past unresolved feelings from similar experiences.

Susan, always the optimist, had a positive experience emerge from one suicide. She talked about how the tragic event brought forth the better side of a student who up to that point had an unenviable position in the school hierarchy – at the bottom of the pole and known as a rat:

> The first few years we had a suicide of a brother . . . the sisters were at this school, the brother – I can never remember – hanged himself. Uh, it was broken to us by, at that time a kid we probably – he was a little rat! [chuckle] But what this young boy did for these two girls, well I can still see this kid in my, in my mind. Uh, he went from rat-hood to sainthood. He ranked, he went right up there. Cause he was the one that then broke it to the teachers. He was just a phenomenal kid! This is the way he was going to help these kids deal with it; I've never forgotten that. (P166L7-14)

In the quote above, there is the sense that even in the midst of a tragedy, great acts can spring forth.

Henry shared his beliefs that anorexia is a form of suicide and then discussed the nature of a violent suicide and the feelings these incidents engendered amongst the school population.

> In a sense, you know, she made a decision. I'm not sure that when she made that decision, not to eat and become anorexic, that she realized that, you know, she was, she was like slowly committing suicide. The instance I'm thinking of now where the person did commit suicide, it was a young man, about – what, would've been about 16. Uh, and, well, guys tend to commit suicide, or attempt suicide, you know, in a lot more violent ways than girls do. And he was successful. He went into a basement and put a hunting rifle under his chin and pulled the trigger. And [pause] the thing was with that, after it happened there were so many people saying, "Well I should've known!". . . . There are a lot of people out there feeling bad. There are a lot of people feeling sad. And there are a lot of people feeling guilt. . . . They don't feel the frustration first of all, I think they feel the guilt. The students tend to internalize these things. You know, and if they, if they know, if they know someone's having trouble they will try and fix it themselves rather than being willing to go and talk to someone who, you know, could put them in touch with some expertise . . . when . . . a suicide happens all those walls break down. You know, there were so many people, and you know, so many kids particularly going around questioning themselves. You know, and they don't like the answers and then they . . . feel . . . real guilt. (P187L17-P188L18)

Henry gets to the core of the emotional repercussions felt by the students after a suicide. Sadness, guilt, frustration and helplessness lead to a profound questioning for the students. Furthermore, Henry's understanding of suicide is accurate in that boys attempt less often than girls but are more successful (Davis & Brock, 2002).

Alex discussed the effects the suicide had on the behaviour of some kids:

> There were a few "for instances" where kids would leave notes saying "Well I feel like kind of doing it myself." . . . And they had warned us that would happen. And it DID happen! (P252L34-37)

A suicide in the school has a large impact on the student population and the community (Ryerson & Kalafat, 2002). Alex and Maria talked about how the students had a strong emotional reaction and wanted to relate to the deceased. This was seen in both verbal and written comments of wanting to join their friend in death. The principals that experienced a suicide discussed how there was also a strong sense of guilt amongst staff and students, as well as themselves, for not having been able to see what was going to happen and for not being able to prevent the suicide in some way.

Appropriateness of suicide memorial

With the death of each student there is inevitably the issue of memorializing the death. How much is appropriate and how much is too much? This question becomes even more problematic when the death is by suicide. Alex was faced with that scenario:

> There's all kinds of things that come at you. The family . . . wanted to have some kind of a scholarship for him (their son), with his picture in the hallway. You just can't do it, you can't glorify a suicide. You really shouldn't, that's what we were told, you're told "You can't do that." Now how do you tell the parents that? But you know, the oddest thing is, we were really told to stay away from that, you know. Those types of things you cannot imprint in the students mind that what Harry (the student) did was in any way, uh you know, positive or special. (P256L26-35)

Tony mentioned the issue as:

> The danger of glorifying this and kids who may be at risk look at all this attention this guy is getting and he's gone. And maybe if I go, maybe if I did this, I would get all this attention. It's really as I said a juggling, a balancing act that you have to do. (P382L2-5)

The main concern for the principal was making sure not to glorify the suicide in any way so that students would not get the incorrect message and see the suicide as a way of receiving attention and yet taking care of the parents and the students need to remember that deceased student in spite of the circumstances.

Graduation

Graduation time brings up all sorts of concerns for the principals including a general worry about drinking and driving, honouring a graduating student who has died prior to graduating, or deciding whether or not to postpone graduating due to a recent death. Mark said, "You think of every year. There's maybe, I don't know, two or three kids who get killed in car accidents at grad." (P239L31-33) Concerning a student who had died prior to graduation he said:

> That was another thing that was difficult. . . . but on graduation there was a picture and a tribute . . . graduations are emotional, I mean, let's face it. There're supposed to be emotional, but this one was truly inherently emotional because of that. (P217L23-29)

Bob "postponed" his graduation while one of the survivors of a multiple death CI recovered:

> He was a grade 12 grad. So, the accident happened May 25th, and he just got out the day before grad. They got him out. So he was in pretty well a month. And grad was right in June, like our grad was coming up the next week, but we postponed it. (P332L34-37)

Henry also had the dilemma of whether or not to postpone graduation. "I think one of the biggest things that we have to wrestle with was the idea whether grad would go ahead because grad was next weekend." (P183L6-9)

Alex, faced with a similar prospect, turned a graduation brunch into a fundraiser for the children who had lost both of their parents to a fire:

> That weekend was supposed to be our grade 12 grad brunch. So what do we do, do we cancel it. We had a Community Centre Sunday Brunch as a fundraiser but actually it was a good idea - one of the grads suggested, well let's use this fundraiser for the family. Because they had nothing left. Their parents are gone. Their house is gone. (P268L33-38)

Tony commented on the competing interests of the parents and school to devise

appropriate remembrances:

> I don't know if you saw the big huge flower arrangement as you came into the school the fountain there, there's a big huge ceramic vase with peace lilies. They (the parents) donated that to the school on behalf of Sam. There still has been a lot of connection with the graduating class and the family, so again, that death has continued. . . . (P373L17-21) There's been times when I've had to say no were not going to do that. You can also glorify the person. There's that fine line. And it's really difficult when you have other parents saying that's enough. And a parent saying this is what we want to do. So that has been a bit of a balancing act, a juggling act. That was unique to this situation . . . our graduation is next Thursday, a week today. There's going to be a presentation to the family in terms of a bunny hug. That's with the kids in grade 12 wanted to do for the family. To bring closure to it. (P381L21-28)

Sometimes the issue of graduation is an ongoing and long-term management concern. It is not unusual when a child dies in high school in grade eight or nine for their classmates to want some acknowledgment of that person when the class finally graduates. This issue can extend into keeping the dead student's locker unused until graduation. This is what occurred in Allan's case:

> We had put a lock on the locker so nobody could use that locker. As a matter of fact that locker is still locked and that locker will stay locked until her class graduates. And that's cause the kids want to see that [pause] that, that locker is special and that, and actually no other kid in the school wants to use the locker anyway, cause that, that was Shauna's locker! You know? And, and that's hers! And that was hers and until, until her class graduates, that's her locker. (P95L37-P96L4)

Allan talked about the first time a scholarship was handed out in remembrance of the deceased student and the emotional fallout:

> And the first one was presented at graduation in June. So, it was a very emotional kind of a presentation because the parents came up on stage to make the presentation and they, like I say, they, they sort of broke down, but were very supported by the community. I remember seeing the, the video of it afterwards, and I mean, Harold - that's the dad - he's up there trying to talk and he says "I'm not sure if I can get through this." And he starts to talk and then he quits and there's this silence. And it's, it's kind of an awkward moment for, for a minute, but then somebody at the back

> starts to applaud and then it just spread through the whole place. Like we had a thousand people in our gym for graduation, and I mean the place just erupted in terms of applause and support for this guy on stage. And he just sort of smiled and then he moved on. (P96L35-P97L2)

Many of the deaths happened just before a holiday, whether it was Easter, Christmas or summer. This timing of the deaths made for a natural closure and time of healing so that when the students returned after a holiday they were ready to get back to their studies. Bob talked about how graduation became a focal point for closure.

> One good thing is – and I hate to say that it's a good thing – but closure by the end of the school year, cause the accident happened in May. We had closure by grad, so it didn't last for a whole school year. You know if an accident happens in September, when's the end? When's the end? When's the end? It just keeps on going and going. You know, you have to keep watching. But we found that closure. . . . It was a natural closure at the end of the school year, which really helped us a lot. (P337L23-31)

When a graduating student dies a number of concerns arise for the principal. The concerns can arise even when the student has died many years prior to graduation as the cohort group eventually graduates and may want some acknowledgement of the deceased. Some of the examples above concerned deaths just prior to graduation and the principal had to struggle to decide whether to postpone or even cancel graduation. Graduation time is highly emotional normally and with a death the principal has the added concern of how everyone will respond to the event. There was also the issue of appropriate remembrances and long-term repercussions. Finally, on a positive note, the graduation acted as the final act in the tragedy and give closure to the event.

Long-term effects of CI in the school

Often there are lingering effects for years and the incident is remembered at the anniversary, graduation, and through memorials and scholarships. In the immediate aftermath of a CI Henry discussed his concerns about long-term effects:

> Which kids are going to be impacted by this . . . siblings? Chances are they're not going to be in school. Cousins, possibly. You know, who else has lost someone in their family . . . in a similar way. Anybody else suffered a loss lately?. . . and we just go through the school. . . We try and pick up every, everyone that we could. And those people we would keep a close eye on. (P190L8-14)

Alex mentioned the long-term ramifications concerning one student in particular. "This was in '94 - the last student who used to write about it, dwell on it a bit, graduated in the year 2000. So, six years after there was still some of that stuff." (P245L14-16)

Allan was concerned with the issue of how to honour a deceased student when her class graduated. Her peers want to do something special and Allan and the school counsellor, who played major parts in the event, may not be around and this worried him:

> So maybe I won't be here for graduation two years from now. And if that's the case, how will the incoming principal, whoever he or she may be, how will they deal with that? Because they didn't have the contact that I had. They don't have the background or history that I had with the family or with the class. . . . If our school counsellor isn't here at that time and she's looking at moving on because she wants to go and pursue her PhD. Um . . . the two key people in all of this were her and I in terms of how this was dealt with. When it came to talking to parents or students or teachers or the public, it was her or it was me. If we're both gone, but yet we're trying to carry this on and be as supportive as we can to the students who were in that class. How will they feel come graduation? . . . I hear the kids talking about the graduation is going be the combination of, of all of this . . . we're going to graduate together, Shauna's going to have a place there. . . . If we're not there, will it have the same meaning for them? Like if there's somebody else who's leading the school, somebody else who's giving them their scrolls, somebody else who's talking about the class. . . . I don't know how all that will be. (P103L11-28)

There are a number of long-term effects that principals think about. The most obvious is determining which students will be affected by the event and who to watch. Typically, this included relatives of the deceased, friends, or students with predisposing conditions that may lead to acting out (e.g., self-harming, violence to others). Another concern was the continuity of staff and the effects on the students. What happens when staff, who

have been intimately involved in the healing process, leave the school, before there is total closure regarding the effects of that student's death on the school? These are difficult questions with no prescribed answers, but if there is an awareness of the issues involved, then these concerns can be examined, shared and hopefully suitable solutions arrived at.

Public Perception

How the public perceived the principal's handling of the CI was a great concern. The principals wanted to appear competent and caring; knowing full well that they could easily step on a land mine at any moment. Often the principal took on a major role in the community events surrounding a death so they were literally on stage for all to see and hear. The principals felt conscious of being assessed for what they said and how they were coping with the situation. This was a concern for Allan who had never "gone through an incident like this before" (P76L4) and was conscious of his performance.

> Everybody's watching what you do! So if you make a mistake on this one, when it involves the death of one of the children in the community, somebody's going to let you know about it. You probably won't hear about it right away, because people are going to want the funeral and everything to get over with, but somewhere down the road if you didn't handle it right, you're going to hear about it. And so, there is that added pressure that whatever it is that you do, you'll want to do the right thing. And the question is, "Is there a right or a wrong answer to some of the things that you do?" (P92L39-P93L6)

Henry has been a principal for 15 years and feels very confident in his abilities. In the beginning of his career he was concerned how the community would perceive his actions.

> I was a little bit worried about it . . . the confidence factor comes into it, you know, and if you have people saying "that was good." If you have parents coming to you afterwards and saying, "Like I appreciate what you did there." . . . that helps you. (P192L15-18)

Alex, too, was concerned about the public perception as people came to him and

asked for his advice. As indicated, this was difficult as he did not feel capable of answering their questions.

Typically, the principal's concern was not only to do a good job but to be seen as doing a good job by making the "right" decisions. This was difficult as there was not always a right way to manage a tragedy. Principals who were managing a critical incident for the first time also felt unsure as they had no training, often no manual, and were "flying by the seat of their pants."

Trauma Emergency Response Team (TERT)

The Trauma Emergency Response Team was seen by most principals as good and useful. However, some principals felt that there were inherent problems with a team that was not site-based. Mark brings up an issue that others had also mentioned - - the Trauma Emergency Response Team was unfamiliar with the students and then left the school after the initial intervention. Mark stated that, "you have to bring in the TERT the trauma emergency response team. Hell, they don't even know the child." (P222L34-35) The students felt uncomfortable and some principals felt more could be achieved with an in-house team. Even though this was a minority opinion, other principals identified the unfamiliarity of the team as a weak point in the process.

Replacing a deceased teacher

Replacing a staff member who has died was difficult for many reasons. How will the students respond to the new teacher? What does it mean to the students to have someone replaced too quickly? How will staff respond? Will the teacher be able to step in and deal with possible resentment from the students? There are so many questions and so many pitfalls. The principals interviewed were grateful that they received exemplary

replacements. Tony talked about the difficulty and the successful outcome:

> The next toughest thing was finding the staff member to replace Paul, and that was just so difficult. . . . (P390L4-5) I had to go through the process of interviewing someone to take his place. And one of the things that we said to the kids was that, you know, Paul will never be replaced. We will have a person who will carry on and finish teaching you biology, but your memories of Paul and Paul's style will not be replaced. . . . I think it was important that the kids knew that as well, too. . . . God must have been smiling down on us because . . . when we hired this young woman, she was just - she's phenomenal . . . the kids love her! . . . . One of the first things she said was like, "I'm not here to take his place." (P39L20-32)

Paul had a similar experience:

> I hired a fabulous lady to substitute and carry on in that class, she and I are very dear friends still . . . I'll never forget where her first job was. I'll never forget what a fabulous job she did from April until June, with that group and how difficult it must have been. [pause] No it wasn't until the following fall that she really had a fresh start, you know, I mean, there's still that cloud over that classroom in our school for the next two months, and then once your summer comes and you get away and you come back with staffing changes and new students, that you can just sort of start fresh. (P10L9-17)

Henry, in his phlegmatic way, bluntly stated the issue for a rural principal. "Sometimes in that small rural setting there's not exactly a plethora of substitutes." (P182L36-37) Whether a principal had a varied choice of replacements or not; replacing a deceased teacher was a great concern.

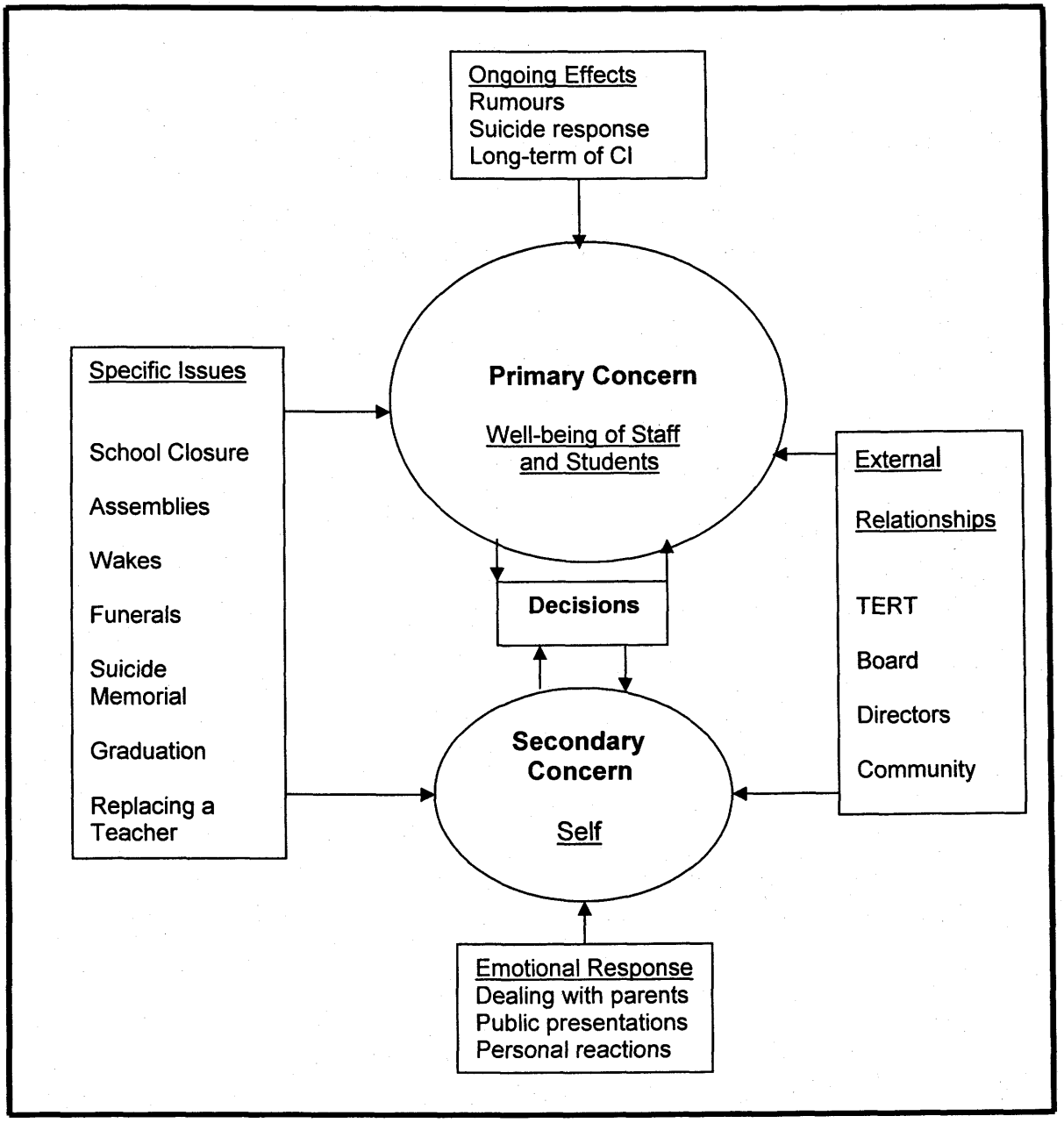
Summary of concerns

The principals' concerns included: managing the CI (effectiveness), personal reactions during the CI, public perception of effectiveness, managing the media, speaking to the public, talking to the parents of the deceased, managing and emotional impact of assemblies, wakes and funerals, decisions regarding memorials, future graduation ceremonies, negative response of staff to interventions by administration, effect of suicide/death on staff and kids, administration appearing as non-feeling, stress on staff as

a student slowly deteriorates due to disease, lack of support by professional body, the lack of familiarity of the TERT with the students, dealing with rumours, school closure, and long term effects on the school caused by the CI.

As can be seen in Figure 5.4, the principals' primary focus of concern was the well-being of students and staff. The secondary area of focus was the principals'

Figure 5.4 Principals' Continuous Feedback Loop of Concerns



personal reaction to the events. Mediating between and impacting upon both concerns were the decisions made during the critical incident. When a CI occurred, the principals made an initial assessment of the staff and students condition and responses to the event while engaging in continuous monitoring until the event has been fully integrated into the school's consciousness in a healthy manner.

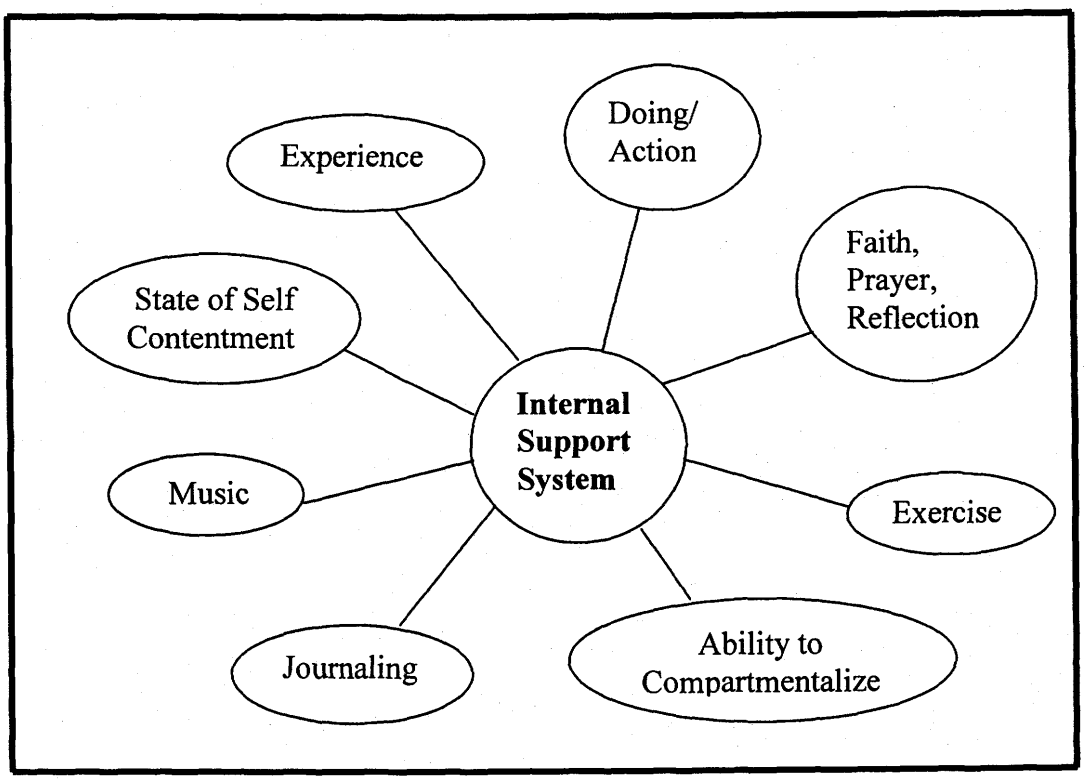
The component parts that made up the principals' concerns included: specific issues, ongoing effects, external relationships, and the principals' own reactions to the events. These issues interact and affect both the primary and secondary areas of concern. As much as the principals separate their own reaction to the event, they can not completely distance themselves and were affected by their concerns and also by their response to those concerns which, in turn, impacted on the school (e.g., the principal's relationship to the deceased, relationship with higher administrative personnel, relationships with staff). Even though the principals focused on the primary objective, the well-being of staff and students, principals typically put their well-being to one side. They were impacted by the tasks and the feedback produced from the tasks. These concerns and the processes that affected the decision-making the principals went through are pictorially represented in Figure 5.4 as a continuous feedback loop. Information flowed to the principals who then made decisions with their primary concern foremost in their consciousness (the secondary concern about Self was typically pushed aside to focus on the primary concern, however, the principals were still influenced by their personal reactions to the issues and events surrounding them) . The effects of those decisions flowed out and interacted with the environment and came back as new information to once again be processed and acted upon.

Specific or logistical issues included: school closure, assemblies, wakes and funeral(s), suicide memorial, graduation and replacing the deceased teacher. Though not shown in the Figure 4.4, the logistical concerns are connected to at least one of, and sometimes all, the external relationships (i.e., TERT, board, directors, superintendents, and community). Beyond the concrete issues the principal had to be concerned about were the sometimes nebulous and ongoing effect of rumours, the students' response to a suicide, and the long-term effects of a CI. While all these events and issues were occurring the principals were also concerned about their personal emotional responses to the event itself, for example, interactions with parents of the deceased and public presentations. Once again, the principals were awash in a sea of concerns.

Internal Support

The elements of internal support are depicted in Figure 5.5. Contributing factors

Figure 5.5 Factors Contributing to Principals' Internal Support System



of internal support were: doing or taking action, faith, prayer, reflection, exercise, music, the ability to compartmentalize, avoidance, journaling and a sense of self-contentment or self-confidence.

Doing/Action

Doing things, keeping busy, and keeping busy by helping others were coping mechanisms reflective of the internal support systems developed by the principals. Susan's response was typical of the principals in that they are doers. It is an ability that is like a double-edged sword however, as doing and action gets things done, but often the principals' needs are neglected. Activity or doing becomes a coping mechanism as Susan demonstrated:

> Right away – I hear some bad news, I'm cleaning the house. Why are you cleaning the house? It's an outlet for energy. It keeps your mind busy . . . it's almost like an adrenaline boost – I don't know how to put it. But I knew that I had to go to tell people who were going to be - devastated. So, what did they need right now? They need . . . support. And if I was in my own puddle how were we as a school, as a community going to get anywhere? (P164L15-23) . . . there are things that have to get done. Some one had to do it. And we can all sit and just break down or just say no, and do it. . . that's the role I have here anyway (P129L13-15). . . . to just get it done. (P129L25)

Susan went on to explain that caring is an active verb and it is an expectation not only of the role but also from the community:

> It's an active doing and helping, not a - laying back. . . in a sense of family or community that expectation is you help the weaker, you help those in need. And I really truly believe that. (P168L28-31)

Once again we see the coping mechanism of activity (as work) during a CI with Alex:

> I feel best when I - like I only took one day off during that whole time. That was the day of the funeral for dad. But I find that if I keep busy I operate better or the stress levels goes down. . . I could never do that, take a day off, just to do nothing, you know, to kind of relax. . . I don't like to call myself a workaholic, and I don't think I am, but I operate better if I

> come into school because if you don't come to school - take a day or two day [off] - then the work piles up on your desk and you gotta deal with things when you're gone. So I find for me the stress levels better if I'm just here. To be honest I don't think I've taken a sick day in my life at school - that's in 29 years (laughs). (P273L25-33)

In Alex's statement the double-edged sword analogy rears its head. His inability to take time off is justified by work piling up which he wants to avoid, but Alex does not consider his emotional needs. He avoids them by working. It may have been this unwillingness to look after his needs that made managing the original critical incident (suicide) so difficult on the personal level.

Paul helped himself by helping others and keeping busy:

> It's a way of giving, I think, and giving was a way of, of uh, dealing with it. . . . it's care giving, I would really call it care giving. And that's something you would do for your own parents, or your own children or your own brother or your own sister when you're in that type of situation . . . .[very quiet] That, that, was a way of, of helping. Helping myself by helping others. (P11L19-28)

Like Paul, one of Allan's major internal supporting mechanisms was to stay busy and helping others:

> Everybody handles those situations differently. I handle them by staying busy. And I immerse myself into . . . what needed to be done . . . I stay as, as busy as possible making sure that the people around me are, were supported as much as I possibly could. (P84L15-21)

"Helping others" to feel good about self was a dominant theme that emerged in Mark's interviews. This theme of helping others combined with problem solving provided the most encompassing picture of his internal support system. The following statements elucidate his thoughts on these processes:

> I think the fact that people talk to me and I'm supporting them. That kind of works it out for me. (P218L29-31)

> One of the ways I think that I've always dealt with stress or anything, is to

> solve the problem. . . . (P219L10-11) I just feel better when I can deal with the situation, when I can fix the situation, when I can remedy something. (P219L20-21)

Like most principals, Tony kept busy:

> Whether it's the running of the school, your son's game that is on that night, whether it's a paper due for class you're taking, the meeting I have with Norm (his supervisor) this Saturday that I put off from last Saturday (laughter); so those are all release factors I guess. . . .(P379L16-19) maybe that's part of the leadership role, being the leader of a high-school there's so many things that you have to deal with . . . it takes your mind off of the tragedy or the circumstances and stuff. (P379L6-8)

Engaging in the demands of the job kept one from truly looking at the self:

> Probably just because it's so busy, yeah. And you know there's so many things happening and I think probably at the time you are able to manage fairly well because there's certain things you know – they have to be done, and it has to happen right away and it has to be there. But you don't always consider what you're needing as an administrator, and what type of follow up you should be doing? (Maria, P38L21-26)

Keeping busy was the most used form of internal support. Keeping busy could include work at home (e.g., cleaning) or at school. The thrust of keeping busy was to lower the anxiety by feeling as if one was doing something rather than sitting around doing nothing and feeling helpless.

Faith, prayer, and reflection

Another common form of internal support was through faith, prayer and or reflection. Whether the person belonged to a religious faith or was an atheist, every principal at some point or other fell back on their beliefs, spiritual or philosophical, and manifested this through prayer, meditation or deep reflection.

Susan, even though not "preachy," (P140L5) had a deep and strong connection to her faith and an understanding of its importance in her life as a school principal. When asked if faith was important to school management, she responded:

> Yes, yes. I don't think I would ever see myself as someone who could get up and pontificate. I don't think I can do that, but what I think is more important too, is that it comes from the heart. What's in the heart is based on what we've been brought up to believe. It is a tremendous support (P140L17-29). . . . The point was one of the good things we had, that we could really fall back on, was our faith development here as a staff (P131L27-29). . . . You look what comes from death. And again that goes back to our faith. The whole thing is, without getting preachy in here, but that's kind of the way we've been taught. And you believe. It gives you some hope because, otherwise, if you look at a death, a death, a death, you go, ahhh shit. Excuse me (laughter). (P140L3-7)

Tony talked about the importance of faith in supporting him throughout the CIs:

> We can use our faith to help support us. . . . (P377L28) so faith is huge. That would probably be one of the biggest factors that helps (sic) us through this. . . . (33-34) it brings it all together it gives you the focus. It gives you the direction, it gives you the courage or the strength, these are maybe clichés, but its true, to go on. (P378L3-5)

Paul talked about the value of prayer regardless of denomination:

> I did a lot of praying and, and I really banked on my faith at that point in time and I started my day with a prayer and we did in our staff room, and, and, we had agnostics, we had atheists, and we had Christians within our group, but it was at least a time of formalized - quiet time. (P8L20-23)

Regarding prayer, Bob stated that, "prayer helped. Yeah. I did that personally. I guess that would be a support as well." (P340L1-2)

Mark's way of coping with feelings and emotions is to have the feelings and reflect on the situation. This reflection leads Mark into an examination of life and a higher power:

> I know how to deal with it. It's - you allow it to go, you grieve, you feel bad. . . so you do sorrow you do grieve and you grieve with the family with your staff. And that's how I deal with it. You allow yourself to grieve and I don't do it with an outward show of tears and weeping. That's not the way I do it. But I do it with long periods by myself -- reflecting. (P219L37-P220L2)

> You know I'm not a deeply religious person but at times like that you start to take a look at what's really important in life. And where do draw on

> any source of help. Outside, beyond your own ability and means. And I think most of us look to a higher power to help us. (P224L34-37)

Similarly, Maria found it useful to "take some time to reflect and think of all the things that happened in the day and make sure that I wasn't going home with a lot of excess baggage." (P67L12-14)

Upon examining the above quotes the purpose for faith is clearly elucidated by the principals. Faith activity during a CI brought people together. It gave hope, direction and focus as well as the courage to go on. It also seemed to help principals and their communities come to terms with the unknowable and to accept, with grace, the tragedy before them.

Exercise

Many principals used exercise to help them deal with the stresses of their work even during a CI. The types of exercise ranged from garden work to lifting weights. Paul was a runner and talked about what he did around the time of the CI:

> I have my own outlets, I walk, I, I jog and . . . I would've been running in April. Probably gone for a run. (P16L17-19)

Bob had a strong interest in sports and it was critical to his self-management:

> I use a lot of my sports – I play a lot of sports – and it's a good way to get rid of emotion, stress – whatever. And just physically stay in a little better shape and the emotional aspect then doesn't become such a burden. (P357L14-17)

Sports, and Golf in particular, were not only stress relievers for Bob but for the entire male population in his community immediately after the CI. Bob remarked on this phenomenon:

> We have a men's league golf on Tuesday nights, and that was – just as an indicator of our community and what a lot of the guys were doing, this is a guy thing. We've never had so many golfers out, ever. And you would

> never expect that with a tragedy; but that's how guys, maybe, deal with tragedy. Everybody came out to golf; I've never seen that many! Never! To this day! We had everybody out, everybody there signed up and we went golfing. And it was like Tuesday and the incident happened Sunday, you'd think "Well, maybe we shouldn't go golfing"; but that's, I was out there with the rest of the guys! I took my three hours, or whatever and we all went golfing. I don't know what the ladies in the community did, but that's what the guys did. (P356L28-P357L2)

Mark also took active steps to insure optimum physical health to support himself in the rigours of the job:

> Watch what you eat and I'm no health nut but, you know, but I'm careful with that. And I work out and I have always done it. For years. And I'm not trying to be Mr. World but it just enough to have a good solid workout. A number of times a week I go in and play some basketball with the kids even at my advanced age, you know, have some fun. (P220L23-27)

Sherri liked to spend time with her "family" work in her "yard" and "go for walks," (P306L15-16) while Henry found his involvement in sports (as a coach) and the outdoors to be beneficial to his overall well-being. He said that he "always coached sports" (P193L19) and liked to "go camping." (P193L20)

Exercise served a number of purposes. It allowed the principal to stay physically healthy, reduced or helped cope with stress by engaging with others in a supportive environment, took one's mind off the events of the day, and gave perspective on life.

Experience

Generally speaking, the more experience the principals had with CIs, the more capable they felt in their ability to manage them. The exceptions to this generality would occur in 1) burnout situations and 2) a highly unusual or unpredictable experience (e.g., being directly involved with the death). Otherwise, like many things in life, the more experience one has the better one becomes in that area. With Alex, for example,

experience itself became a support mechanism, so much so, that he did not have to refer to his manual - he knew it so well.

> I think we're more prepared now . . . I think I have more contacts now, I can get a couple of people out here . . . so, in that sense I think just in the last 9 -10 years, you know, you gain experience. You gain - so to go through this kind of protocol - I think I just know that off the top of my head already what to do. The first time with Harry - it was very new. So I've had some experience then that I really didn't even have to go to any formalized plan to be honest. (P274L31-P275L7)

Bob summed up the strongest elements in his ability to cope emotionally with CIs.

> I think it's probably the, the big thing that gets me personally through. I've been to a lot of funerals in my life, you know whether it be relatives, friends who have died, etc. I've seen lots and uh, experience, experience helps. Faith and experience. (P340L18-20)

Susan and Henry both mentioned how they have become so expert at managing CIs that their concern was not the CI itself but in becoming too good at it that they appear not caring. This is evident when Susan said, "and the biggest mistake I think we made . . . is not showing that it does bother us." (P172L23-25)

Music

Only a few principals used music as an internal coping mechanism but it was important to them. Paul was "a big music fan, so I listen to a lot of music." (P29L28-29) Mark also took care of himself through his interest in music, both listening and playing. "Also music is big in my life. I like to listen to music. I like to play music." (P220L27-28) These principals spoke with passion about their love of music and how important it was in helping them deal with the stress of a CI.

Compartmentalize

The ability to compartmentalize can be a useful skill. Typically, the process of

compartmentalizing occurred immediately after the initial shock wore off from hearing about the CI (it may indeed be that the compartmentalizing itself puts the shock of the event on hold – to be dealt with at a latter date). It seemed to occur concurrently with the action or doing phase. By compartmentalizing, the principal reduced the overall size of the event into manageable and less overwhelming parts. Paul, for example, was efficient and used this skill as a way of helping himself both organizationally and emotionally:

> I am able to subtract a lot of the emotional aspect of it by about six o'clock; five thirty, six o'clock. I'm able to just separate myself from things, but I will think through things and make lists. (P30L4-6)

Maria talked about learning and being able to "detach yourself from certain things at certain times" (P66L40) as important skills to develop.

> You have to deal with it but if you need to get away from it. You have to be able to remove yourself from that instance and go do something else for a while. And in that way you're making sure you're managing your stress levels. (P66L41-P67L1)

In the above quotes, it is apparent that in order to compartmentalize these principals had to be able to detach. [This was not necessarily a bad thing. In a time of crisis, it may take a certain level of detachment to be able to manage what would otherwise be an overwhelming amount of incapacitating emotions.]

Journaling

Only one person mentioned that they journaled at the time of the CI. At the time of his first two incidents Tony was completing his Masters degree and keeping a journal. He found this very useful in processing the CI:

> I kept a journal of my first year and so going back and reflecting and doing chapter four on those reflections was good therapy for me because I was going through all this other stuff and unable to go back and think and reflect on how the first year went was great. (P372L29-33)

This process of writing about the experience as it happens and then being able to review it at a latter date was beneficial for Tony.

Self-contentment

One principal was particularly self-contented. Most of the principals displayed ample amounts of confidence as one might expect from a person in a leadership role. Henry, however, relied on this inner sense of peace and contentment to help him manage his role:

> I'm also very, very comfortable with myself . . . (P195L30) I really think the key is . . . that sense of peace. Because I think it brings you a degree of security as well. . . . you feel secure about yourself and about your capabilities. (P193L36-P194L1)

Henry was also the one of the most experienced principal both in terms of years served and in number of incidents managed. This maturity and his ongoing success in CI management most likely have contributed to his positive management style and ability to cope.

Summary of internal support

Internal support consisted of the principals' solo activities (music, exercise, journaling, prayer, meditation, doing/action) activities with others (doing/action, exercise) and mental states brought on by experience or overall sense of well-being (self-contentment). Keeping oneself busy through activities was the most used form of internal support. Most times, the activity was directly related to the school but sometimes it was as mundane as housework. Activity acted as a de-stressor, a way of focusing attention, avoidance of feeling, keeping oneself together emotionally, and as a way of helping and feeling helpful (as opposed to helpless). It also helped stop ruminating by focusing on a specific and immediate task. Furthermore, principals noticed that their

stress levels dropped when they were active. When talking about action or doing, it was within the context of caring actions and caring was seen as an action verb. If the principal cares, he or she does (i.e., takes action).

All the principals interviewed had some form of belief system, which included a "higher power" of some kind. Prayer was often the first line of defence upon hearing of a tragedy and was used for support throughout the process. This was often done in private but could occur with staff and in large group meeting with students and parents. Having faith and belief in a higher power supported the principals in a difficult time by countering the depressing reality, and giving direction and encouragement to continue despite the sorrow that was omnipresent. Finally, reflection was seen as an important activity in which the days' events could be examined for improvement. It was suggested that these internal reviews happen at school so that the evening at home could be free from the worries of the day. Reflection was also a time to ponder on the unknowable and unpredictable while taking time to grieve.

Exercise, which occurred as a solitary activity or with a group, was seen as an opportunity to reduce stress and forget about the problems of the day. With a group there was also a social aspect and an opportunity to talk about the CI in a supportive environment. Exercise helped the principal stay healthy at both the physical and emotional level. Exercise also had a meditative quality and this offered the opportunity to find perspective and give form to the cacophony of distracting and pressing demands of CI management.

Another activity that had similar effects, though cited less often, was listening to and playing music. Music is able to transport one away from the concerns of the day

while being a balm for the wounded soul. Another reflective practice that only one principal mentioned was journaling. The principal that journaled talked about how it helped during the event to collect his thoughts and think about what needed to be accomplished and how, after the event, he was able to read what he wrote and experience the bigger picture and effect that the event had on him.

At the cognitive level, the ability to compartmentalize thoughts and feeling was deemed extremely useful when managing a stressful event, like a CI. Finally, the self contentment and self-confidence that comes from a deep sense of ability and satisfaction with self helped the individual cope with CIs and to project stability into the school environment.

Internal support could also be considered as coping strategies or internal resources. These resources are used not only in times of stress but in the principals' everyday life (with a few exceptions, e.g., journaling). In a sense it is about lifestyle. During times of crisis some components of this lifestyle may get more of a workout, like prayer and deep reflection. But knowing ones reactions to stress and having a history of self-care strategies in place assists the principal in managing him or herself.

An interesting coping strategy was avoidance. Some principals knew areas in which they were not able to cope, so avoidance was a practical solution. The task was delegated out to someone who was deemed better able to manage that task. The principals who did this were not trying to be supermen/women but dealing with a crisis situation within their own limitations. They were being responsible and more concerned with managing the task rather than impression management.

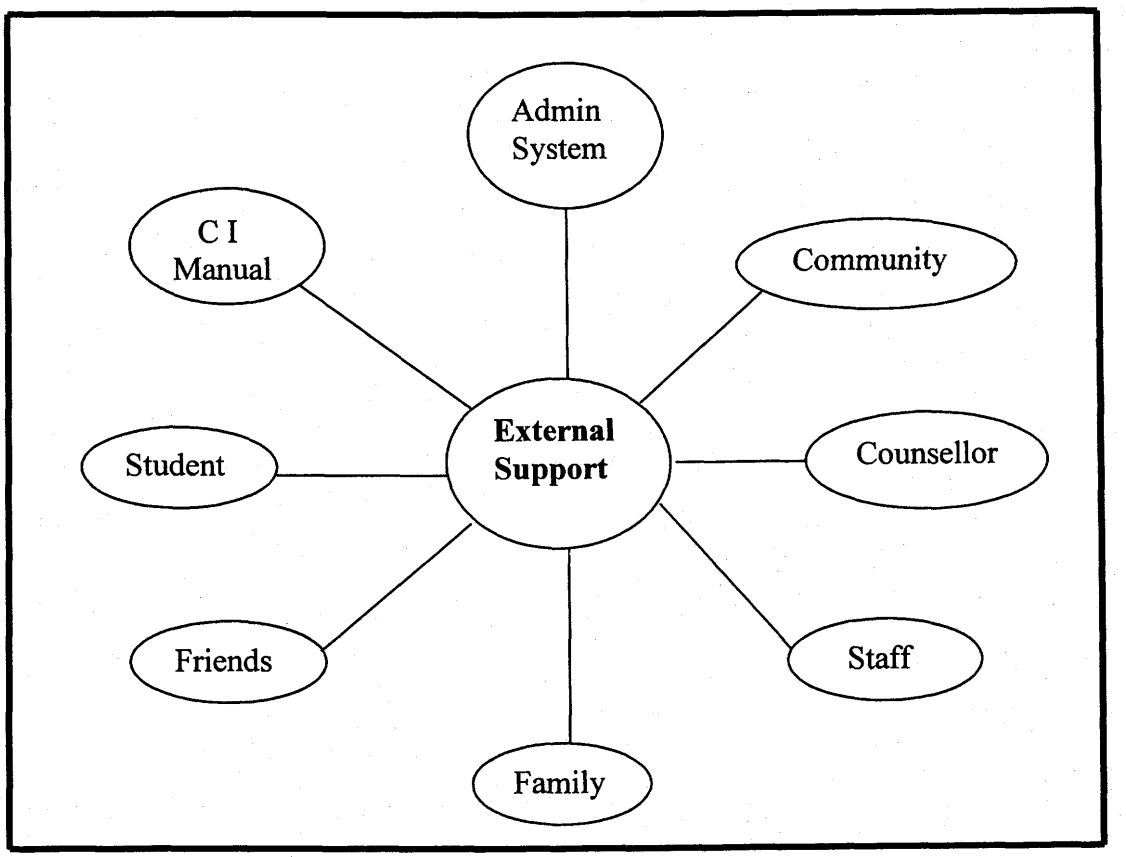
Another factor that principals mentioned was experience. Experience was a great

internal support. Having gone through a CI previously and survived gave the principal a decided edge. He or she knew what to expect (to a degree) and most importantly had a sense of their own response mechanism to a CI. This was an advantage if one had a positive experience. If it was negative more anxiety could be created. In this study, at least, the principal who had the greatest difficulty with his first CI made tremendous strides in managing, both internally and externally, his subsequent Critical Incidents.

External Support

The manual, staff, community, family, counsellor, friends, and the school system itself were all external supports for the principals and are depicted in Figure 5.6. The theme of family includes spouse, children and pets. Due to the special relationship between the principal and counsellor, the counsellor has been separated from staff in this

Figure 5.6 Contributing Factors for Principals' External Support



analysis. Staff includes teachers, other school administrators (e.g., VP) and office personal. The school system refers to stakeholders within the school system including division office. The community includes the school system, parents and ancillary services run outside the school system by the community (e.g., fire department).

Administrative and systemic support

Administrative support refers to all support help received from administration both within the school (e.g., vice-principals) and outside (e.g., assistant superintendents, superintendents and directors). Support from the school system was greatly appreciated especially when it was direct and hands on, as it was in Bob's case. His director was the head of the TERT and Bob said that he, "received lots of support. I guess first of all from the division's point of view, the school division. We had a team led by our director who organized all the counselling for us." (P318L20-22) This director debriefed the staff on the first morning and supported Bob throughout the management of the CI. "The Director of Education, at that time, dealt with the media" (P319L28-29) thus freeing up Bob's time for supporting his staff, students and community.

Systemic support refers to all other support systems that have been designed as an integral part of helping the principal to manage the school not previously included (e.g., counsellor, district health, TERT, clergy, and support teams and committees). Tony described the support he received during his crisis:

> Well we have . . . an administrative team for one thing, and the other two assistant principals. They're called upon to help out. We have the counsellors they're front-line people that will be called upon as well. Because were a Catholic school, the priest chaplain and we also have a teacher chaplain. They're also key in terms of our support staff. There were two incidents in which our staff were wonderful for being here helping out that type of thing and . . . the division tragic events response Team. One of the events that we had involved a health issue, a health concern, so district

> health, someone from district health was here as well. That was very helpful. (P367L2-10)

Maria talked about some of the systemic support that she felt was useful:

> We have a school committee . . . which is a group of five individuals who are elected. And they sort of oversee, along with the Director of Education (P52L34-35)

> We have a principal's group. So, of course, there are things when we meet we can talk about certain things and we help each other and we support each other in that way. (P63L39-P64L1)

Sherri felt strongly supported by her director. "We're in constant contact with our director - all the time . . . probably two or three times a week at least." (P312L20-22) As can be seen from the above quotes, help received from administration and other systems was greatly appreciated.

The functions of the trauma emergency response team were seen as an important part of the CI management by all principals. However, a couple of principals felt that it would have been more effective to have had in house teams and one principal questioned the efficacy of having a team come in that the students did not know and for such a short time. On the issue of time, some teams returned to the school on a regular basis until it was felt that they were no longer needed. These teams were involved for months after the original incident and in one case came back to the school after the holiday season. So, even though there were mixed feelings about the teams, overall they were highly regarded.

Community

The concept of community was extremely strong for the principals in this study. This may be reflective of the strong sense of community spirit that pervades the Province of Saskatchewan with its historical roots in agriculture, as the home of Medicare in

Canada, and a great stronghold for proponent of co-operatives. This sense of cooperation between the school and the community was evident on a day-to-day basis and especially so during a critical incident when most needed.

Alex, for example, talked about the local response which underscored this concept of community support. There was a fund-raiser for the children, who had lost their parents to a house fire.

> It brought in over a hundred thousand dollars . . . which is good. You know I just talked to Marge (the adoptive mother) yesterday and she said, you know, whenever I go to the butcher shop - there's a side of beef or something left for me - people would - don't even leave a name, or I park the car somewhere and I come back and there's a ghetto blaster under her clothes or something. So, in that sense, the community has really come together to help this family. (P269L44-P270L6)

In this quote, the ongoing caring by members of the community is demonstrated through acts big and small. Alex mentioned other incidents in which the community helped:

> I had parents come in - a couple of board members - Moms who were a *big* help. You know, cause I don't have a vice-principal so they - that first day they just stayed and they helped out with things eh - it was really good. So it really was a team effort and that was a really a good way that we went about this last tragedy. (P276L26-30)

> St. John's Hospital nurses . . . everybody was [helpful]. The parents were really good. I think the kids. There's a lot of . . . of bonding. [very quiet] Helping each other all to get through a tough time, so. Everybody was really supportive of each other. (P255L37-P256L2)

Susan talked about, "a sense of family or community, that expectation is - you help the weaker, you help those in need." (P168L29-30) From this sense of family, responsibility, and community the principals looked out into the community to see what was "needed by the families," (Tony: P371L14-15) and demonstrated the school's concern by going out and being, "willing to take the time" (Tony: P371L16) to visit. This reinforced a sense of community and the schools part in the community.

Regarding parental support Paul said:

> A lot of our Moms came in . . . with food and muffins. . . . I'm sure we had six or eight parents in that day . . . I mean their own children were in the school so they, they were there to assist. They were there offering to cover classes; they were there with food. So we had very good support. (P15L24-30)

The community was also a source of support for Sherri:

> I mean, small town community support is just huge . . . it's quite overwhelming . . . it's wonderful to have that type of support when something happens. (P296L28-30)

Henry, in his current school, has managed to involve the whole community in Critical Incident Management. They included:

> Traumatic response team. That came from . . . the community. . . it would've been from, you know, social services, mental health . . . we had a liaison with the police. We had a liaison with the hospital. (P189L38-P190L9)

This connection between school and community, though common, is not a given. One school drew its students from many different communities and the principal said it took years of concentrated effort to tie the school into the outlying communities and create a sense of cohesion. Maria, the principal of the band school, constantly looked for ways to incorporate the community into the school and transform the view of school from a non-relevant, dangerous and culture destroying environment into the view of the school as a healthy and safe place to learn and better oneself.

At the literal level the school is often the biggest space available and funeral services or memorial assemblies are held in the school. In Tony's case "the funeral service is at the church that's connected to the school." Typically the teachers who lived in the community further enhanced this connection. Maria talked about living on the reserve just a few doors down from the two girls that had died and that "they were very

much a big part of my everyday life. I saw them all the time. I talked to them all the time." Likewise, Alex talked about the community and the contact with the victim.

> It's a close, small community. . . . you know the parents, and you know the kids quite well and, you just - - you become part of it. . . In a smaller school . . . it wasn't impersonal - it was very personal. I knew the kid well. I had taught him for years and I had coached him and knew the family. (P254L25-29)

This dissolving of the boundaries between school and community was most evident in the rural communities where the teachers were originally from that community. Allan discussed how was able to use the support of teachers who were originally from the local area:

> A couple of those people are very integral parts of our community and they're very good sounding boards for me. . . . (P88L40-P89L2) these people actually have grown up in the community, they've left, and now they've come back and they're teachers here. And so they have an insight to what goes on in the community and what the community's feeling that I don't have. (P89L7-10)

This quote not only points to the strong interconnections between the school and the community but also to the principal's wisdom in noticing the relationship and using it to the schools benefit.

Another area of community support came from the clergy. In the Catholic system the support of clergy was woven into the school system and greatly appreciated by the principals. Allan recalled having had an abundance of support by the clergy:

> When I came here twenty years ago there were seven churches in a town of a thousand people. So we have a ministerial association in town which currently I think there are five members. . . .We actually had one of them on site for probably, oh off and on for three days, and another one for two or so. (P75L7-13)

The clergy were an additional support along side and similar to the counsellors. With the administrative staff leading the way, the clergy, counsellors and CI Team formed a

triumvirate that spearheaded the emotional healing of the school. With other denominations it was not unusual for them to offer their services and be in the school. They would say something or lead a prayer during the assemblies and were key players, obviously, at the funerals. In the school they formed part of the team that talked to the students. The clergy was seen by the principals as important in the process of dealing with death.

With the interactions of the principals with their communities, a softening of the principal's formal role occurred when supporting the grieving parents. As Bob said, the principal "almost" becomes just another community member. "I'm going over probably more as a friend in most cases. . . . (P332L18-19) Your hat comes off as a principal almost. It just - - you're another person right beside them." (P332L27-28) During a critical incident the boundaries between the two communities, school and town/area of city, became more diffused and blended, one into the other. The degree to which this happened was dependent on the nature of the incident and the relationship between the principal and the community.

The principals' relationship between the students, staff and parents was enhanced by their ability to create connection. This ability to establish an interrelatedness or connectedness was described by the principals as essential in establishing a healthy and effective community that could work well together during a critical incident.

Counsellor

The principal's relationship with the school counsellor was a most important external relationship for those principals who had a counsellor on staff or had one assigned to the school for the CI. This was an unexpected finding and the special nature

of the relationship cannot be overestimated. The counsellor not only supported the principal but also was integral in the management of the CI. Principals talked about their relationship with the counsellor as being like a "team" and special. Susan, for example, talked about the office camaraderie and the relationship she had with her two counsellors:

> Lots of laughter in the office. It's not a tense place to work. The two counsellors, oddly enough, are my very good friends. But we've been through a lot together. I provided one of them with a tremendous amount of support; she turns around and she watches me. Watches for me if I'm having a bad day . . . so those are my support group. (P171L40-P172L2)

Paul's major external support came from two sources; his counsellor and the "rural" parents. He had this to say about his counsellor:

> Now we had a fabulous counsellor, and she did a lot of the keeping us moving along in . . . what we needed to do and . . . following the document, and, and taking initiative on a lot of things (P9L5-8). . . . She took the bull by the horns and was able to help me to the nines; phenomenal lady! So, her and I did a lot of planning together, discussing. And she was much more capable at this than I was. The week for me was a blur, was very much a lack of sleep and a lack of oh, I think real, real clear thinking and a lot of things. So she was the person who made it all happen. I put on my administrator's face and went about my day and did what I needed to do and I think she was the clear head in the building. (P22L18-24)

Allan could not give enough positive comments about his counsellor. Their relationship, from Allan's point of view, was integral to the successful management of the CI:

> I really need to take my hat off to our counsellor here at the school, not ever having gone through an incident like this before, I mean, it was a real learning experience for me, and . . . taking advice from my counsellor and taking advice from the clergy and what they had to say, and taking advice from parents and then trying to make all this work. (P75L38-P76L7)

A key figure in Henry's external support system was his counsellor. "We were very good friends. And as a result of that it made it very easy to share responsibility and also to . . . act as resources for each other and, you know, supports for each other." (P199L33-36)

The principals in these examples appreciated the support, friendship and professional assistance they received from their counsellors when managing a CI. As Alex said, "we certainly rely on each other. I know he relies on my advise, a bit . . . and I rely on his and his expertise and I use him whenever I can." (P276L39-P277L2) The word "team" was often used to describe the relationship the principals had with their counsellors. The principals talked about the counsellors in glowing terms and felt that their relationship with the counsellor was special and as a team they were able to get through the tragedy and manage the event effectively. For Susan, her counsellors were also her best friends, Alex described his assigned counsellor as being a mother figure, and others talked about the special and mutually supportive relationship with their counsellor.

An interesting comment that commonly arose was how the counsellor made suggestions that the principal would not have thought about or would even have thought the suggestion to be unworkable (assembly to announce death). But at the urging of the counsellor the principal tried the suggestion, it worked, and the principal was amazed at the positive response. Not all suggestions were used but the principal took the time to explain how, from an administrative view, it was not appropriate. What is important is the degree of communication that existed between the principal and their counsellor. It was a team in the best sense of the word and the principal highly valued the counsellor's expertise.

Staff

Another area of support came from the staff (i.e., teachers) in the school. The staff support was not universal, but when in evidence, greatly appreciated. Susan's staff, for example, would check-in to see how things were going, "I also have staff, without

knowing, who will come in to see how things are going. . . . (P137L17-18) they'll make sure that our needs are being met too." (L25)

Alex was appreciative of the support from his staff as can be seen when he said, "The staff too was a big help. We were kind of all on the same track. We all pulled together. . . . (P276L25-26) And I had a staff member here, my resource teacher who helped a lot. " (P258L10-11)

An indirect support, that lessened the burden Allan had to carry, was the support the teachers gave each other. More directly, they were a valuable resource for their connections in the community.

> And I would say our staff supported each other an awful lot, . . . I'd say half of the people are here until 4:30 - 5 o'clock anyway. On those days, I'd say 90% of my staff were here till 6 . . . talking to each other, sitting in the staff room having a coffee, or what-have-you, so. . . . (P89L27-32) This is my 22nd year here. I've been in the administration since 1985, I guess, and then I was vice principal for ten years and then principal for seven, so I mean I've been in administration for seventeen years and I've developed a lot of very positive relationships with people who have been here for a while. And I, I really used them and a couple of those people are very integral parts of our community and they're very good sounding boards for me in terms of, you know, we're going to organize this memorial service - what do you think the community will think? (P88L36-P89L3)

Mark talked about a particular staff member who aided him:

> I think every principal needs a sounding board, he needs a kind of friend because you're a little bit detached . . . You need someone to take a look at what you doing and give you an honest evaluation of things. (P218L31-35)

Maria felt that, "there was a good deal of support just from the staff itself. . . . (P39L19) they're really good about coming in and lending a hand and assisting when necessary." (P56L21-22)

Staff support aided the principals in their management of the CI in major and minor ways. It could be a simple checking in and asking how things were going and how

the principal is doing, creating smooth working relationships amongst staff and with the principal, taking on responsibilities especially in the community regarding the CI, or acting as a personal friend and sounding board to the principal.

Family

Most principals took great support from their family. When talking about family they included, spouse, siblings, parents and pets. There seems to be a sharp distinction between those principals who did not want to involve or burden their families and those that deliberately included them in the process. Even though Susan did not want to worry her family about her job she found that her family was indeed a support, especially her siblings:

> I've a very strong family support system and if I needed them they would be there in a moment. . . . (P138L26-27) I have a very, very close family. In fact, borderline nuts I think. And so if I need something silly to do, we just do it and we get together and we are just stupid. (P171L8-10)

> Regarding his family, Allan stated that he has "brothers and sisters who are within, you know, a half an hour driving distance and we stay in fairly close contact. And. . . I visit my parents regularly and that's a support too." (P118L2-4)

Last but not least was the support of his wife. "I went home at night and my wife and I would sit and talk about it. I guess that's where I would sort of debrief for the day." (P84L23-24) Alex too, found his "wife was a good support". (P255L35)

Some principals relied heavily on their spouses and others deliberately avoided that support. Susan, felt that it was unfair to bring the school issues into her home life. Mark didn't feel the need particularly and Bob was just too busy to talk much with his spouse. For others, spousal support was critical. Their spouse offered a shoulder to cry on and discuss the pressures of the CI. Time with their spouse was an opportunity to

regain clarity, vent frustration and release emotions. Referring to his family, Tony stated that the support he received from his wife was significant.

> It was really good in terms of being able to share with her (his wife), the reaction of the staff. You know, obviously she was concerned about how I was feeling and if I was okay and those type of things. But she also realized that there were things that I needed to get done and, you know, what could she do to help me get those things done. . . . (P296L3-7) she's very, very supportive. (P371L28)

Sherri also took support from her spouse and family when she said that, "my husband's probably the biggest support. . . .(P306L2-3) my family always becomes my support." (P316L8-9). Bob looked to his parents in this difficult time:

> The very first morning I talked to my parents, had a good chat with them, and they gave me a lot of support . . . I think my parents as, you know, being older, they had a lot of words of wisdom and that helped a lot. And you know when it comes from your parents you take, you know, their words to heart. (P339L22-29)

Maria too, talked about her family:

> Family is a very important part of it. . . . (P66L7-8) My husband and I have four daughters. So I think when I talk about counselling a lot of times there are things you might discuss with them - there's always the element of confidentiality. They don't necessarily know who or who is involved with the things but sometimes you do just have to talk about certain things and or explain to someone, I'm feeling really bad today, like this and this and this happened, and ah maybe I'm having a little bit of a harder time coping with it. So if I'm not behaving in my usual way or if I seem a little down - a little bit more anxiety or something then they have an understanding of where you're coming from. (P67L28-36)

Throughout our conversations Henry repeatedly mentioned the support of his family. "We talk lots; we communicate lots, do things together. . . that helped me cope." (P184L3-5) And last but not least was the comfort Paul found in his dog:

> I have a dog, a big brown lab, chocolate lab, and he and I do a lot of walking . . . he's a great friend. (P29L25-27)

Support for the principal from the family was important and most evident with spouse, siblings, parents and sometimes even the principal's children. In other words, the whole family was a support.

Friends

Friends can be like family and some principals preferred the support of friends in order to avoid bringing their worries into the family. Alex, who would not normally seek outside help, learned that "it's nice to talk to someone occasionally or a friend" (P280L4-5) when managing a CI. Tony had an extended set of community relationship and is highly involved with his friends. "We have a really close group of friends in this community. We get together with them on a regular basis. Our family is really close, my brother-in-law, my wife's brother, is my best friend probably." (P379L20-22) Sherri also took support from outside her immediate family as can be seen when she said, "[I] actually went through it with a few friends." (P290L25)

Students

Typically, during CIs the students are on the receiving end of support. However, students can be a major support and can originate ideas that help the community heal. Allan talked about how his students got "involved in planting some bulbs and, and do something that shows growth." (P97L25) Alex talked about how a death had occurred just before a school fundraiser and "one of the grads suggested, well, let's used this fund raiser for the family." (P269L12-13) Susan took support from watching how her students react and cope with life.

> You see the strength in the kids and I always think we will do fine. There's always hope . . . I take great, great, support watching the kids around and how they cope. (P139L5-8)

These gestures, large and small, help and encourage the principal in coping with and managing the critical incident.

Critical Incident Manual

Not every principal had a manual when confronted with a CI especially earlier in their careers. The difference between having a manual and not was significant and those principals who had manuals indicated that they would not do without it. Even a manual in the draft stage, as in Maria's case, was described as a critical piece of support throughout the CI:

> It (the manual) may have been in the draft or in a working process, but it wasn't actually there. And I think now, if I look back at what I have now – even though it's a draft – I think I feel a lot more confident that there are actually things there that I could read and see. You know, what type of procedure I need to follow. (P42L3-7)

Through his work with the community Henry "established a community protocol" (P189L3) which became a valued resource. The school and community, through numerous experiences, became adept at handling CIs with the aid of this protocol. Bob was insistent on the importance of a manual:

> That's number one I think. Having the protocol in print. . . . (P364L1-2). Have a written policy. We were lucky. Have something there, because to figure all that out you, you don't know where to turn. But it was all there, or most of the guidelines. You, you have to make (up) a few here and there, but most of that was in print, which was really nice. (P344L21-24)

Paul was grateful for having a manual:

> The tragic events manual that we followed was absolutely a God-send. Because the details that it has suggested, the protocol it . . . It was really a phenomenal reference for looking after everything that needed to be looked after. No two incidents would be the same, but it was so helpful. (P32L7-11)

Allan felt the same:

> Make sure you've got a good print resource available. . . . (P102L26-27) I'd

> get a hold of any kind of print resource that I could and read up on accepted policies, procedures and guidelines for dealing with this. (P101L37-38)

Having a printed document available supplied the principals with confidence as they had a ready reference that gave guidance and could be used as a checklist to make sure nothing was forgotten while working under stressful conditions.

Summary of external support

The school system, counsellor, staff, students, manual, family, friends, and community are all external resources that the principals drew on for support. As displayed in Table 5.1, the external support is divided into three areas; school, personal and community. The community field represents the resources that may be separate from the school with weak linkages or highly integrated with the school and overall disaster planning in the community. Ideally the more aspects that the principals had integrated into their support system the more opportunity exists for support and effective managing of the CI.

Table 5.1 Categories of External Support

School	Personal	Community
School System - V.P. - Head Office - Support teams Counsellor Staff Students Manual	Family - spouse - parents - children - siblings - in-laws Friends	- Parents - Nurses - Case workers - Mental health - Hospital - Clergy - First Nations - Fire Dept. - Police Dept.

All but one principal would have stated unequivocally that external support was critical to their successfully managing the CI. Whether it was only one person, usually

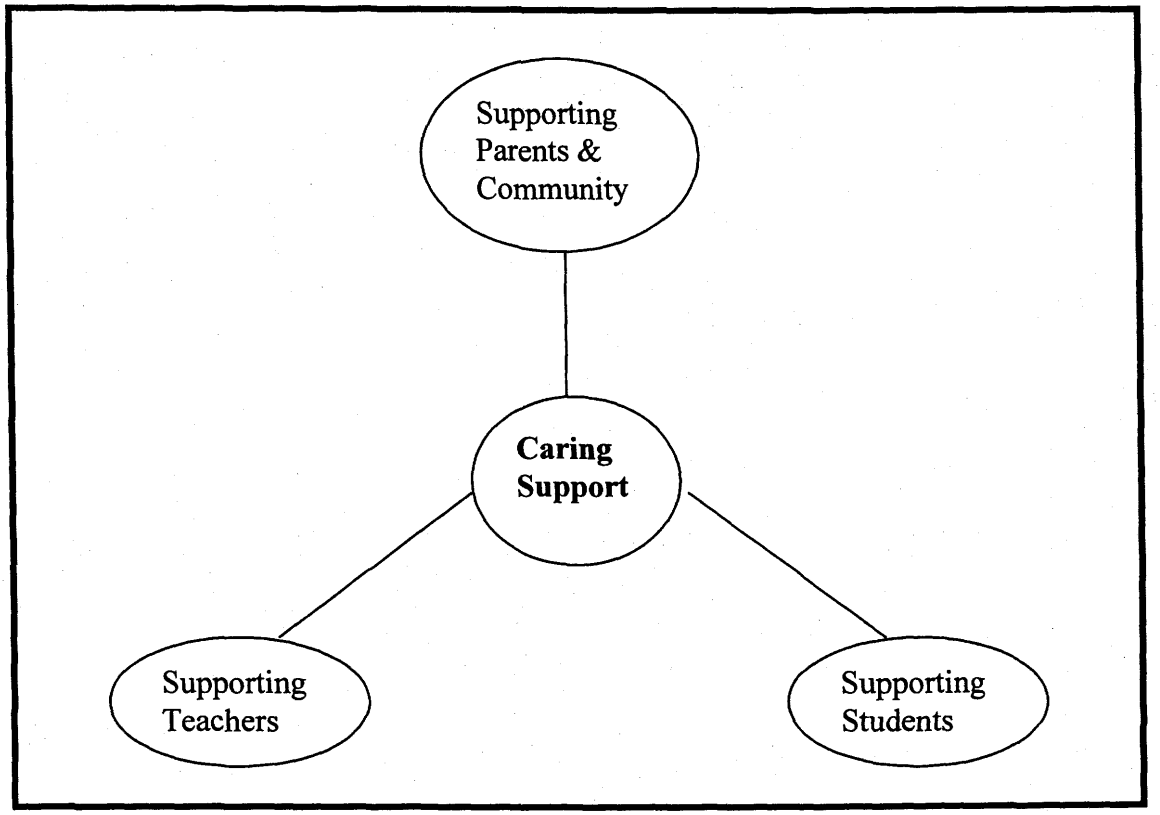
the counsellor, or the whole community, the awareness and appreciation of external support was clearly stated. External support was provided by people with two exceptions. One exception was the CI Manual, and that was created by someone. The second was Paul's dog.

For some principals their only support was the counsellor. For others, it was the school system, the community, vice-principals, students, spouse, health care workers, board, friends, clergy, family, division office, CI team, and aboriginal elders. The principals that had the most support talked about the sense of community that was enhanced through the shared tragedy. They also felt supported and that they were not the one solely responsible for managing the event even though they may have been the originating source. Those principals with the least support sounded as if managing the CI was a war, especially when they did not have support from the division office. What follows is an examination of the support that the principals gave to others in their school and community.

Caring Support

A major component of the principals' experience when managing a critical incident is giving support to students, staff and parents. In Figure 5.5 these aspects are represented. The principals constantly talked about the efforts they expended on consoling, encouraging and just listening to the difficulties staff and students were having coping with their feelings. This support that the principal provided started the moment he or she found out about the death and the inevitable confirmation call to the parents, through to the funeral and beyond into the final recovery stages.

Figure 5.7 Elements of Principals' Caring Support



Supportiveness is an element of both Putnam and Mumby's (1993) concept of "bounded emotionality" and Noddings (1984) concept of care, in which support helps create a "caring" environment. Typical quotes in the area of caring included, "part of our role is care and compassion (Susan: P176L32). . . . you care about the welfare and well-being of kids and staff (Susan: P176L14)." Paul exemplified the principals' feelings and how he demonstrated caring during a CI:

> I would really call it care giving. And that's something you would do for your own parents, or your own children, or your own brother, or your own sister, when you're in that type of situation . . . that was a way of, of helping. . . . (P11L23-27) [I] went from room to room within the building and made myself visible, asked if I could help. . . . Are you okay? Do you want to walk? Do you want a drink?. . . . (P15L4-7) So I did a lot of that, and went in the staff room, and, and certainly looked to help and any, any of the kids who were out of the rooms, I was making sure that they were . . . if they wanted me there, I was there. So, basically did that all day long. . . . (P15L12-15) I had a very good relationship with everyone in

> the building and uh, through mutual respect, through care and just being very [pause] umm - - being available and, and making sure that I reached each one of them, the staff. Just to make sure that I had touched each one of them in terms of, of knowing where I was, that I was there for them and that we were in this together and that we would get through it. (P18L22-27)

Paul summed up his thoughts on this issue when he said, "I think as equally important is the whole interpersonal aspect of care, of empathy, support for people (P28L24-25). . . . to be just a team player and caring person for everybody." (P28L33-34) These kinds of sentiments about caring are indicative of the relationships the principals had with the school and community and the level of support offered.

Support by the principal fell into three general areas: support for teachers, support for students and support for parents/community. Regarding staff support, the concept of "team" and "teamwork" was mentioned frequently. The idea of "family" was also put forth as an ideological touchstone which the principals used to convey to the students and teachers the need for supporting one another.

Supporting teachers

There are many ways that the principals in this study supported their staff. One way was to create an environment where the staff felt they could come and talk to the principal. A number of principals had an "open door" policy and Susan was always willing to "listen" when the teacher needed to "vent" and just be "available, just to sit and talk - to support people." (P131L38) This environment was not only occurring in a one-on-one situation but also for the group. "The staff would go in together and express what we needed to. People were openly crying. Support - that was the main thing" (Susan: P131L31-32). Sometimes support meant looking ahead. Susan had a staff member who had lost a child in the early part of summer and therefore "every June I need to be ready

to be a support to him." (P163L12-13)

This looking out for other staff members who might be susceptible to the effects of stress during a critical incident was at the forefront of Bob's concerns. He said that he would, "have an idea as to kind of where everybody was coming from a little bit, and then we'd kind of watched a couple staff members to make sure they had the support." (P326L29-31) During the CI Mark found that he "spent a lot of time pulling my staff together and helping them with them with their problems." (P216L15-16)

Supporting teachers has an added benefit besides making the principal feel good and keeping the teachers in one piece. The support was mirrored back to the principal. There is a reciprocity that occurs as the teachers try to support the principal. Many principals felt and appreciated this checking in by their staff. Allan explained it as follows:

> People, wanted, I guess, to know that you were available. And that if they needed to come talk to you, they could come talk to you . . . almost every single time I walked into the staff room, and sat down, or just walked into the staff room, someone would come up and start talking to me. They'd be asking me a question or "How are things going?" or "What can I do to help out?" So they're trying to support you, and at the same time, you know, you're trying to do the same thing – "How are things going? How are the kids handling it in your room? Is there anything that you need?" (P90L2-10)

Paul talked about a similar experience that occurred in the staff room when there was a lot of upset. Everyone was involved in supporting each other. "It was very beneficial. Grieving support, people understanding what was happening next; all of us were involved in helping one another and in sharing suggestions as to where we needed to go next." (P22l10-12)

This working and supporting each other encourages the sense of group or team. Maria talked about the "staff that's able to work together in a team effort" (P59L6-7) is

beneficial as "there's always someone there to help and support you in the things that you have to get done." (P59L7-8) Paul furthers this point and believes that:

> Teamwork is one of the most important things to having a, successful school, in my mind. If staff are happy and supported, the end product with the children will be superior if you work in a supportive environment. (P26L28-31)

In the above quote Paul points out the value of supporting the staff leads to direct and positive consequences for the students.

Supporting students

Supporting the students is frequently on the minds of the principals in this study. Some even related their preference towards the student over their staff. This seemed to come from their days as a teacher [many still taught - one principal who had two vice-principals taught a class just to stay close to the students and teaching] and a perspective that saw the students, at times, being more mature than the teachers. Tony was always looking to see how his staff could "best support . . . the kids." (P373L41) Maria was "there if a student needed your support." (P39L30) Allan saw this supportive stance as, "an extension, I guess, of the family in some ways. Because the kids come here, the parents expect, and we expect, to provide a safe environment, a supportive environment." (P82L18-20)

Henry talked about the complex relationship that exists between the students and their teacher during a critical incident and how they influence one another.

> Some of the kids are bent out of shape. You know, sometimes teachers have problems dealing with that. And . . . kids pick up on that big time . . . I think the key . . . is to give support to both. (P195L3-6)

These statements support the reflection of the metaphor of family into the school as has been mentioned previously.

Supporting parents

Typically the principals' main support for parents during a CI was when the principals represented the school and were a) visiting the parents and giving condolences, b) working out memorial issues and c) funeral arrangement (e.g., eulogy, pallbearers, choir). Sometimes this support might be longer term if, for example, the child was dying of cancer. This situation often necessitated intense involvement on the principals' behalf. Other times that the principal would have intense involvement would be when there were issues of neglect or when the principal was directly involved with the counselling process.

Susan stated her view about what her thoughts were upon a child's death. "I knew that I had to go to tell people who were going to be [long pause] devastated. So, what did they need right now?. . . . these people were going to need support." (P164L19-22) Mark also found himself supporting parents "who are having difficulty with their kids." (P216L16-17) In the band school, Maria was "there to help with the family and whatever was needed." (P39L29030) These were typical statements by the principals who did whatever they could to support the parents in their hour of need.

Support: The big picture

The self-reflective principals in this study engaged in a process of looking beyond short term issues and problems to long-term consequences. Maria, for example, looked not only to her immediate responsibilities but was constantly looking for areas that she, staff, school and community could improve upon and be pro-active in managing Critical Incidents:

> Just working as a whole group and being able to - like take it beyond the school. If you're in a school division and they're several schools then just

> that support system being able to work together to support each other and, you know, if something happens in our school then someone from another school may have some valuable information or input that would help us. So taking it a step further, not just school wide but sort of division wide and finding out that would work in terms of supporting each other. (P63L29-36)

Maria's vision of what is possible extends beyond her community and out into the division.

Paul, on the other hand, was more analytic in his appraisal and puts support into a relationship with the managing aspect of leadership when he said:

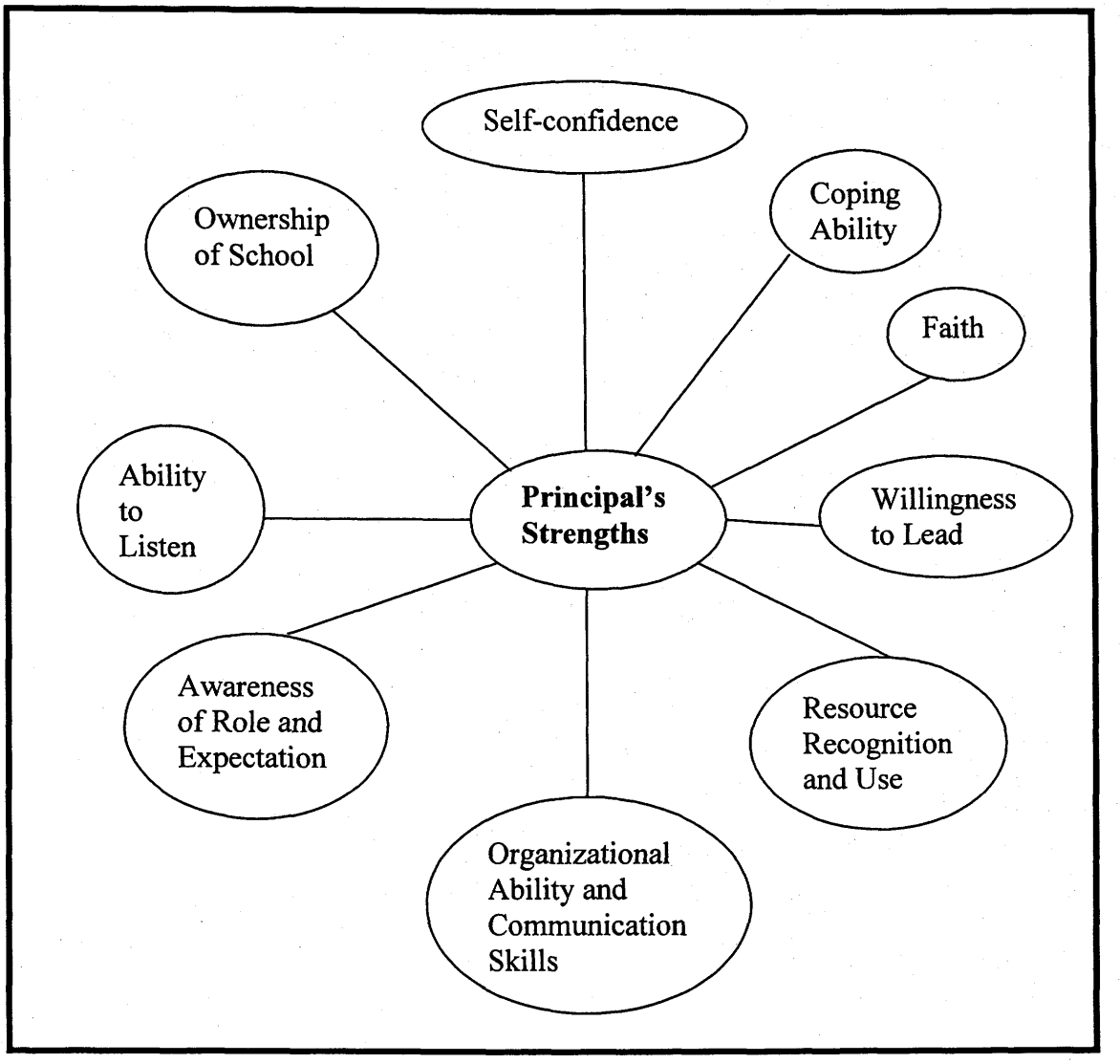
> Well, the qualities of being able to be an organizer and be a communicator . . . to think clearly despite, you know, a difficult mind set. . . . those are very important, but I think as equally important is the whole interpersonal aspect of care, of empathy, support for people. (P28L22-25)

The principals' support of their students, staff and parents had many benefits including the creation of a collegial atmosphere, trust, and encouraging support for one another and a caring atmosphere within the school. The stronger the connection to the community the easier it was for the principal to communicate and get support in times of crisis. By supporting others the principal was building a base of support for him or herself. This becomes an invaluable asset that can be called upon when a crisis situation erupts.

Principal's Strengths

The principals had many personal attributes that helped them manage themselves and the CIs. Factors contributing to the principals' strengths are shown in Figure 5.8. It was impressive and humbling to realize some of the attributes it takes to be the leader of an organization in a time of crisis. These qualities, labelled "principal's strengths," included: an awareness of role and expectations of that role, an ability to recognize and use strengths and resources that are available, faith, self-confidence, ownership of the school, organizational ability and communication skills, the ability to listen and a

Figure 5.8 Factors Contributing to Principals' Strengths



willingness to lead.

Awareness of role and expectations

Though there was not unanimity on how to demonstrate the role of principal, there was a clear recognition that the principal had a role and that the community had expectations of what that role was and how it should be played out, especially in times of crisis. Mark defined his leadership style as, "paternal" (P212L9) and he made no excuses for his philosophical orientation. He also felt that in a crisis the stakeholders of the

school "look to the leader for strength of character." (216L9) Mark saw his responsibilities as all encompassing:

> He is a counsellor first of all, he's the leader, he's the counsellor he's the teacher he's a coach, everything. He fixes things, I mean that's what he does. What I did was counsel people. I counselled not just students I counselled staff all the time. (P215L35-37)

Like Mark, Susan saw herself as someone who got the job done:

> There are things that have to get done. Some one had to do it. And we can all sit and just break down or just say no and help everyone else. And that's the role I have here. (129L13-15)

Susan saw her responsibilities as much more than just doing. "Part of our role is care and compassion. . . . (P175L32-33) to watch out for my kids." (P176L19)

Likewise Bob was clear as to the expectation placed upon him, "for coordination they definitely looked for that. And communication with the division office, with media anything like that – they wanted me to do that."

Paul adroitly summed up the expectations:

> Well I believe there's some formal expectations in terms of communication with the media, communication with the parents who are asking about circumstances - - that role is ultimately your role as administrator at the school - - mostly those are the official ones or what you accept in your job description and position. I think there was also some informal or incidental expectations that I would be an organizer and so there were those types of things too. It would depend on personality; it would depend on a lot of things as I look back on it. (P21L21-28)

The principal has a multiplicity of roles to uphold and duties to execute. As leaders of the school they are responsible for the effective management of the CI. This included all the normal roles but also the less clearly stated roles of caregiver, guiding light, and coach. The job must get done and must seem to be getting done by students, teachers, parents and division office. The principals described themselves as "fixers" and

"communicators" and they must carry out these roles and expectations with, "care and compassion."

Resource recognition and use

Most, but not all principals were able to demonstrate this skill of resource recognition and use. This seemed to be a function of leadership style with the more democratically oriented leader more willing to tap into resources outside of him or herself. Tony's philosophy was to:

> Rely on the people that are there, the strengths of those people. And delegate and empower, those type of things, to be able to get as much help and assistance as you can. I'm the type of person that wants to get as many people as possible involved in taking ownership etc. And I think when you have a crisis or tragedy that brings people together and you see the leadership. There are some teachers I looked at in both incidents and shaking my head thinking, wow, you could be running the school. They just have that natural ability of dealing with things. So you take advantage of that. Tap into those people's strengths and use that (P379L34-P380L4) . . . . You have to deal with it the best way you can; with your own strengths and with the strengths of the people around (P380L28-29). . . . We empower and we lean on people and we work with people. (P395L3-4)

Bob was amazed at how responsive and capable one of his teacher's was when asked to form a choir in three days to sing at the funeral:

> The leadership was really spread around as to who would be doing what at the funerals, and who would look after, you know, visiting families and . . . who would direct the choir – we didn't even have a choir at that time and we put a choir together in three days type of thing, so . . . everybody kind of took leadership roles wherever they felt comfortable. (P349L28-33)

Throughout the interview, Maria was adamant on having a team approach when dealing with a crisis situation:

> I think you have to have that sort of team approach. You have to be able to work together and you have to allow your staff like - every person has strengths and you know where a person's strengths and weaknesses are, and even though you're an administrator, you rely on the strengths of your staff members to help you get through what you need to. (P57L2-6)

Allan talked about how the relationships changed between himself and parents of the children as a result of working together through the CI:

> But this was different. This was working with parents and relatives of the family in a, in a sort of a totally different way. And they saw both myself and the school, I think, in a totally different light than they'd ever seen us before . . . it helped us develop a relationship with some of the parents in the community that we just never had before. And to this day I have parents who, at one time – because either I hadn't taught their children or I'd never really had an opportunity to deal with them through, through the school – I see them on the street now and I see them at community functions and they treat me totally differently because of the opportunity that we had to work with them through this, through this whole ordeal. (P110L10-24)

The resources that principals are referring to are people. It was advantageous when managing a CI to be able to delegate and empower so that assistance could be garnered efficiently, with a team approach. This support was emergent and encouraged as it arose or was actively marshaled by the principal. This was accomplished by an open attitude to receiving support and encouraging those people who demonstrated leadership qualities to exercise their abilities.

Faith

Susan, Tony, Bob and Paul and others mentioned their faith as being an integral part of who they are. It might be expected from the Catholic principals but it was also evident from the principals working in the public system. None of the principals, Catholic or otherwise, came across as being overly zealous in their practice, though a number indicated that their faith was of primary import in their lives. One principal identified himself as an agnostic, but like the others identified himself as having a spiritual relationship with existence.

Through the following quotation, Maria related her spirituality with her

behavioural patterning and hope:

> When you're raised in a certain religion or even just acquiring other philosophies or views along the way - I think that has a big part in what you do or how you react to things and what you believe in and how you're gonna deal with things. Part of it comes out of your spirituality and what you believe in and - I don't know, never giving up - always having hope you know those kinds of thing - being able to work from that. So, that in itself gives you kind of an inner strength to keep going and never give up and just always be looking for ways you can change to make it better. (P68L3-10)

Tony talked about the value of his faith when he said, "it (faith) brings it all together. It gives you the focus, it gives you the direction, it gives you the courage and the strength, and maybe these are cliches, but its true - to go on." (P378L3-5) Susan also mentioned how faith helped her to carry on.

> You look what comes from death. And again that goes back to our faith. The whole thing is, without getting preachy in here, but that's kind of the way we've been taught. And you believe. It gives you some hope. (P140L3-6)

Bob talked about the support having faith gave to his staff and himself:

> We're a pretty strong faith community – we're a public community, public school, but we have a lot of staff members that their faith does takes them down this line and supports them quite well, including myself. (P326L7-10)

Paul's strength through faith was similar to Bob's:

> I really banked on my faith at that point in time and I started my day with a prayer and we did in our staff room, and we had agnostics, we had atheists, and we had Christians within our group, but it was at least a time of formalized, quiet time. (P8L20-23)

It is clear in the statements above that faith gave a lot of support to the principals. It gave strength, courage, focus, direction, hope and the encouragement to carry on when times are tough. The origins of one's faith, as Maria mentioned, are typically historical.

However, it seems that one does not need to have a specific religion in order to reap the benefits that faith has to offer.

Self-Confidence

Every principal exhibited a strong degree of self-confidence. Whether it was genuine, or false bravado, or gentle, or tempered, or youthful, these principals exhibited a degree of confidence that was assuring and admirable. All seemed willing to shoulder the responsibilities of leadership.

Notice the similarities in the two quotes from the eldest and youngest principals. Henry, the elder, stated, "I'm also very, very comfortable with myself." (P195L30-31) Sherri, the younger said, "I'm very comfortable with who I am." (P314L26)

Some principals gained confidence through surviving their CIs. Alex stated that, "Getting through that gives you strength. All those things, I guess, after the fact I realized 'I did this' There's not too many things I shouldn't be able to handle." (P260L11-13) Similarly, Bob said:

> Probably learning that you're stronger than you think you are, you know, when it comes down to it. Like, I went through a couple incidents before then and they were tough to get through, but this, when you're pushed, usually most people are strong enough that they can survive and do what needs to be done and those types of things. (P359L12-16)

Principals tended to be confident individuals and the more experience they had managing a CI the more confident they tended to become.

Ownership of school: Care of staff, students and parents

Principals took ownership of their schools. They were passionate about the school and protective of the staff and students as well as being supportive of other stakeholders, especially parents. Henry saw the effects of this attitude for the school.

"You look after the kids and you look after the staff. . . . (P195L32) You're establishing, a sense of calm and a sense of continuity in the proceedings. . . . (P195L36-P196L1) Creating that security in the environment helps." (P196L2)

Susan, in her typically blunt manner stated that, "people are more important than paper." (P132L6) Furthermore, "you can never do wrong by showing concern for people, or reaching out to people. That is never wrong to do." (P172L6-7) Like the other principals, Susan felt that she was "of least concern" (P129L29) as her role was to "watch out" for her "kids" (P176L19) and the well-being of the school.

Sherri too, was, "quite concerned as to how they (the kids) were going to react" (P299L7) when the Team came in to debrief and was also worried about her aide who, "was having a hard time. She was very emotional with it . . . and I was concerned for her for quite a while." (P295L9-10)

Paul, in this statement, directly conveyed the sense of ownership of his school in a literal sense.

> When I went to that school, um, we were, we were in a bit of a process of change and there was some people retiring and I was hiring new people. And so it was MINE, when I was done, in terms of staffing. . . . (P14L5-7) And they would say that there would never be a group like that again. We just got along so well. (P14L12-13)

The sentiment that Paul conveyed was typical of the strength of feeling surrounding the principals concern and sense of ownership of their school. Maria highlighted some concerns she had:

> Some of the things that were of concern were the fact that when we close the school down, sometimes the families and the homes are not able to deal with the students so they're sort of off on their own. So there were feelings that the school should be open; the counsellors would be available. And again, those students who felt it necessary to talk to someone, there would be someone there. And if they felt the need to

> approach someone then at least that would be available to them. (P35L30-36)

The principals' focus in the demonstration of their ownership of the school became evident as they created an environment of security and caringness. The principals interviewed saw the welfare of their charges as their number one goal. The principals went the extra mile in their relationships with students, teachers and staff and had a strong desire to run "their" school effectively.

Organizational ability and communication skills

Without a doubt, for the successful management of the CI, organizational abilities and communication skills were the most talked about skill set. Personal skills included: the ability to write (e.g., memos and newsletters), time management, the ability to project self-confidence (i.e., in control of the situation), the ability to keep confidences, being open and approachable, and being able to project a vision or higher purpose such that "people feel part of something better." The principals talked about the importance that the school community felt it was moving forward and there was hope of recovery and healing from the tragedy.

This skill sets involved both logistics and communication.

In the following quotes, the principals talked about their skills and what they felt was important in this area. Henry said that:

> My strengths were – probably . . . interpersonal skills, ability to be a leader; probably organizational ability; written skills and so on. Plus the desire to, I guess, to be in the action so to speak. (P202L9-11)

Alex liked to stay in contact with the parents through the written word:

> Yeah communication is really important especially to the parents. You have to let them know what's happening because they want to know that the kids are, you know, being looked after in terms of counsellors, it's

> very critical. So I normally send out newsletters. I don't have a monthly newsletter but whenever I think there's things happening - it probably amounts to a newsletter every three weeks that I send out. (P278L6-10)

With his staff Alex had, "a lot of communication - good communication - informal usually, a lot of it." (P278L30-31)

Paul gave an indication of the degree of coordination and communication that took place during a CI:

> Well there were certainly calls that needed to be made to inform people affected by it; people outside our school community who would have known our staff member well. Certainly some things that we did with the family, in terms of speaking to them about their intentions and their wishes and those types of things. I had contact, of course, with my bosses to keep them up to speed on what we were doing. We shut the school for one day, so I needed to get official permission; some board members were sharing things, communication things, outside of our own school community. Beyond that I can't think of -- other than personally going to visit the family. (P21L9-17)

Paul went on to talk, in detail, about the degree of specificity that was created to manage the process of who did what and when:

> When we met that Monday night, we had a designated person to contact the family so that they were talking to one person about their wishes, and that all the communication was coming through one person, and so that, that the amount of detail, the amount of information that wanted to be shared was, was totally through one person. We actually wrote that out on paper so that any sharing with anyone was . . . on a template. It was there so that there was no additional information shared. Within our group we had someone as a media contact person so that if, if the press was to call and, and ask for a statement that would've been, I think that was my job . . . . We were very specific. (P7L33-P8L2)

Maria talked about the need for communication amongst the staff:

> Like I said, you have to get them together. You know, it's not always easy to get everybody together as much as possible. . . . (P46L37-38) communication . . . how you're going to handle the situation, what's going to happen, knowing what needs to be said. Just in terms of organizing who's going to be responsible for what. (P47L6-8)

Allan talked about the various pressures and the importance of organization, time management, and communication:

> Well in terms of pressures, I mean obviously your time management skills become very important because you're dealing with this traumatic event which affects most of the school. But at the same time, it doesn't affect all of the school and there is an expectation that we carry on with things as normally as we can, but at the same time you are dealing with all of these, these other side issues. You're dealing with the family and you're dealing with students that are distraught; you're dealing with staff members that are at various levels of crises and um, but at the same time you're trying to keep some degree of normalcy to the school. So, definitely, just being able to get things done. And it meant some long days and being organized and having time management skills, I think, was very important. (P109L28-38)

> There was a lot of written communication during that time, backed up with the staff meetings that we had after school where we could clarify what was in the, the memo throughout the day. Because there were things that were coming up. You know, like, I'd be sitting here trying to organize something and Shauna's mom would phone and say, you know, "Have you guys thought about this?" or "Can you do this for us?" and then all of a sudden, sure you can cause you want to be supportive. But now everybody's got to know. So, how do you get that information out there in such a way that people find out quickly but it's done confidentially. . . . through a combination of personal contact with teachers, memos, confidential memos in their mailboxes if it directly involved them. (P86L37-P87L6)

Allan continued to talk about the importance of teamwork and the importance of communication in creating not only teamwork but also a sense of openness and approachability:

> The word "team" . . . you can't be the lone ranger on this one, you can't. If you try . . . that's when your stress level is going to build and that's when, you know, people are going to feel left out in terms of communication and that's when I think some other stressors can come creeping in. Because as soon as staff feel not involved, not communicated with, they're not getting all the information, they feel isolated; and I think the last thing that people need to feel, through a critical incident, is isolated. People need to feel part of something better and, and I think we achieved that by, by just sort of through the meetings and the communications that we have, so. I'd say that, you know, communication

> is, is a strength of mine and like I say, I usually err of the side of too much communication; I try and use different modes of communication and provide opportunities for people to communicate back. We've got an open door policy in the school. I mean it's not unusual after school to see six teachers lined up outside my door or (the counsellor's) door wanting to talk to us and because people feel we are approachable. And I think that's important, too, in a situation like this that people need to feel that, if they have concerns or they just need to talk, that you are approachable and you're there for them. (P121L33-P122L13)

Organizational ability and communication skills consist of two areas of expertise - personal skills and interpersonal skills. Underlying the strengths of the leader was the *desire* to be a leader. This element encompassed both the personal and interpersonal skill sets. As Henry indicated it is an advantage to want to be where the "action" is because as a principal there was a lot of action especially in a time of crisis.

The interpersonal skills were demonstrated by the ability to get people together both literally and figuratively. Encouraging the team aspect of organizational behaviour was seen as essential to effective leadership. This was supported by good communication skills, both formally and informally, and specifically by the ability to manage staff meetings. Interpersonal skills were also needed to communicate with and comfort staff, students, family and the community. It was critical, as the leader, to be able to manage the process (e.g., assigning tasks and delegating responsibilities). The ability to be specific and create templates was considered adjuncts to this process.

Allan discussed the importance of his development of the people-side of his leadership skill set:

> I've really tried to work on the leadership and the people side of the organization; because the management stuff . . . you can learn how to do. And if you've got the, the time management skills, and the organizational skills, you can get very good at it. But is the other side? Because the people in your organization are always changing; the students are changing, the parents are changing. And it's trying to come up with skills,

> a repertoire of skills so that you can deal with all of that in a positive way and still lead your school in the direction you'd like to see it to go. . . . (P115L25-32) I guess just general leadership, because most certainly the staff did look to you. Like, you know, how is this going to unfold? What are we going to do? What's the memorial service going to look like? Who's going to either lead us through it or who's going to speak? And those kinds of things. And most certainly the staff looked to, to me to do that . . . and if I wasn't going to do it, how was I going to empower others or divide up the duties or, or that kind of thing so that these things got done. (P116L15-22)

Effective communication was not only an immediate process but one in which constant modification over time was needed as the receiver of the message changes. It was suggested that parents, teachers and staff can change over time and what worked today may not work tomorrow. Therefore, knowing the stakeholders and having a relationship with them becomes critical in order to notice change. In order to be effective in this process skill development may be needed. Effective relationships enabled the principals to create a positive atmosphere, give direction and empower others in completing tasks.

Ability to listen

Communication was seen as a two way process. In the previous section communication was discussed primarily from the principal out to everyone else. Now the underused side of communication – listening – is examined. All the principals discussed how they communicated with their staff and listened to their worries and suggestions.

In her humorous way, Susan talked about how she provided the space for her staff to "vent" (P131L37) and the importance of being available just to sit and talk. Susan saw this as part of her "role." (L131L35) Mark had staff that would "break down a bit and we would talk it over."(P216L2) Mark saw this as an integral part of his functioning as the principal.

Allan, as mentioned previously, believes that it's "important, too, in a situation like this that people need to feel that if they have concerns, or they just need to talk, that you are approachable and you're there for them." (P122L11-12) Allan, when talking about all the different stakeholders in a CI noticed how, "that really gave me an appreciation for working with different groups and the importance of listening to everybody before you sort of made final decisions." (P99L37-39) Alex too, talked about the importance of listening and not just to adults as "kids coming to you and sharing how they felt and you listening" (P260L3-4) and this eventually led to Alex incorporating the children's suggestions.

Typically the principals' saw "listening" as part of their role and that this role served an important function. Being willing to listen allowed staff members to vent or discuss concerns or for the principal to hear valuable suggestions. It was suggested that the principal must not only listen but create an environment in which students and staff felt encouraged to share.

Willingness to lead

All principals were willing to lead and some more readily than others. One principal had leadership thrust upon him but the rest willingly chose to be principals. Some relished being in a position of power and for others it was a heavy burden. All principals appeared to take their job and position seriously and were aware of the demands of leadership.

In a reflective moment, Paul said that, "you do what you have to do . . . [quiet] I just took it upon myself to, show leadership I guess. That's why I do what I do." (P13L16-19) Mark identified that leading was part of the role "as principal, as the formal leader of

the school, then I have to take charge of these things. . . . (P213L20-21) It's the leader helping his people." (P216L5) Tony saw his role as modeling for others his beliefs about leadership, "It showed the type of leadership that we have, or that I try to portray at the school in that we empower and we lean on people and we work with people." (P395L2-4) This was similar to Susan's concept of the willingness to lead as, "part of our role, and that's where the servant leadership comes [from]." (P168L22-23)

A willingness to lead is seen by all principals interviewed as a prerequisite for the job and part of the role definition of principal. Willing to lead and leading were used synonymously and principals were just doing "what you have to do." This included helping and serving others and leading by empowering.

Coping ability

Obviously, the better one's coping ability, the better one can deal with crisis situations. Not all principals had effective personal coping strategies when dealing with their CI. Some became aware, after the fact, that they needed to improve this aspect of their skill set. On the other hand, some principals had excellent coping skills.

When Sherri was first interviewed she seemed a little distanced and self-protective. Upon hearing her story this started to make sense. The CI had occurred just three weeks before the interview and her father had died just before the CI. The CI was demanding in the sense that she tried to save the child and worked on the body (CPR) for 20 minutes before the paramedics arrived. Her main concern during the CI was to keep herself focused on doing a distasteful task (mouth to mouth resuscitation - the boy had vomited and was non-responsive). Sherri was the youngest principal at 28 years old and this was her first CI involving a death. In the following quote Sherri described how she

coped with the incident:

> I have a tendency – and I know I do it too – I go through it, I have the emotional part and then I just, that's it. And then I deal with it inside, and . . . I don't portray that to other people [laugh] . . . and I get the "You're so strong!". . . "No". . . "Okay, I've had enough!" And it's kinda dry and that's, that's the end of it. (P295L10-15)

In a similar fashion Henry tended to put his feelings aside especially when dealing with the CI. "My personality is such that I can compartmentalize things and . . . while I may feel, I realize that I have something to do." (P181L19-21) And yet, it is not like he did not have any feelings. He felt the same as others might have and this was evident when he said, "There are a lot of people out there feeling bad. There are a lot of people feeling sad. And there are a lot of people feeling guilt . . . I feel the same way." (P187L34-36)

Knowledge and an understanding of self, according to Henry, allowed him a sense of self-satisfaction:

> The key is . . . that sense of peace. Because I think it brings you a degree of security as well . . . you know you feel secure about yourself and about your capabilities. And also about what you've done . . . you draw a sense of satisfaction from that. And I think that at other times it allows you to reach an accommodation with yourself, a realization . . . yeah this happened, you know, but we did this the right way. (P193L36-P194L6)

Tony experienced a shift, from his earlier CI to the last one, in both his coping strategy and how he represented himself or demonstrated his feeling in front of students and staff. In the earlier incidents, though feeling the "shock" of the experience, he managed to put on the appropriate face of a concerned principal in control of the situation and his feeling. During the last experience, in which a teacher who was a friend died, Tony let his emotional experience out in front of students and staff. He discovered that this was a positive experience. "I was able to deal with it in a different manner, and probably a better manner than the other ones because it was more personal." (P396L26-27)

This was a surprise for Tony as he would not have seen himself acting this way nor had he in the past.

> So we met with the staff in the morning and that was really difficult and . . . I broke down. But there's nothing wrong with that. You know, there's "Us guys, you know, you can't show that emotional stuff!", but that's, that's not right. So I think people got a good idea of how this was affecting us as well and that it was okay to show that grief and it was okay to show that emotion and stuff. . . . (P394L16-21) they have a perception of what a principal is like and stuff, and to see the principal as being human and showing emotion – well, that was important. So, you know, everything from disbelief, shock, to great sadness. (P395L7-10)

Tony carried this belief into the classroom as well. He went into each classroom in the senior grade with the counsellor and talked about the teacher that had passed away. Part of the process was the sharing of personal stories about the deceased teacher, both from the staff and the students, in a healing circle. Tony did this four times in one day.

> I think the kids being able to see us and our reaction and not holding our feelings back and sort of showing that it was okay to grieve openly and um, it was a very, very good experience. . . but it was intense, man! It was . . . just so powerful. (P389L18-21)

Mark took a three-pronged approach to coping with tragedy. One, he was philosophical about death (similarly, others relied on their religion), two, he was self-reflective and three, as with so many other principals, he helped himself by helping others. Mark did not seek help from others in a formal sense, as he preferred to work out his feelings for himself:

> There's a grieving process and there is stress but what are you going to do? Are you going to talk to - I'm not the type of person where someone talks to me and tells me how to deal with it that's (not) going to help me. It wouldn't help me. I know how to deal with it . . . you allow it to go, you grieve, you feel bad. There's a time to, like the Bible says, the Proverbs, like the ancient Kings said, you know, there's a time to mourn there's a time for sorrow, right. It's not the time to be happy so, so you do sorrow you do grieve and you grieve with the family, with your staff. And that's how I deal with it. You allow yourself to grieve and I don't do it with an

> outward show of tears and weeping. That's not the way I do it. But I do it with long periods by myself. Reflecting. Trying to see what, what would this be like if this was my own son? You know, how difficult it is it for the family? What if it was my son Alan? And it puts it into perspective. You wouldn't even have to do it because he is like your son sort of. A kid that you helped to grow up, you know. I have hundreds of kids like that on my list. I would feel really bad if they, they died. (P219L34-P220L6)

Even though Mark saw himself as self-sufficient he did seek the support of a trusted confidant from the school staff. However, Mark reversed the emphasis and demonstrated how, by helping his friend, he helped himself:

> Just talking to him and letting him get his feelings out helped me because it meant I was helping him and therefore if I'm helping, you know, as principal you help and therefore you feel good that you could help . . . And if you deal with it, if you solve the problems, if you counsel people, and help - that makes you feel like you've done what you should do. You resolve the issues yourself by doing that. . . . (P219L5-14) I just feel better when I can deal with situation, when I can fix the situation when I can remedy something set everyone on track so we can get back to normal. (P219L20-22)

As much as Mark liked to solve problems as a way to feel good about himself and his effectiveness, he realized that with death issues problem solving, per se, would not take away from the emotional impact of the death:

> With any tragedy though, there's a point where you just have to let the whole thing envelop you, surround you and there's really nothing you can do about it. We are powerless in the face of death is really what it comes down to. I think it's a time when you just realize this is where it ends. You don't solve this, you know. (P237L16-19)

As is evident in the above quotes there are many individual coping strategies. Some strategies are typical of most principals, for example, coping by taking action and compartmentalizing. Sherri described a similar process as the ability to just put her concerns aside and not show how it affects her. Unlike many principals, however, she allowed herself to emote first then get on with her job. Typically, other than feelings of shock and sadness most principals held off on their emotional expression until the

funeral. Some principals coped with their emotional experience by turning in and reflecting on the CI and their feelings. Having a self-understanding and a philosophical approach to life and death aided in the principals' coping with critical incidents. Helping others and executing their responsibilities in a skilled manner were also cited as beneficial factors. Finally, it is possible to change coping strategies, as happened with Tony when he went from a compartmentalizing of his experience and withholding emotional expression to one of demonstrating his emotions to students and staff alike. Tony used this process to enhance closeness with and healing amongst those affected by the death that occurred.

Summary of Principals' Strengths

Sometimes the obvious has to be mentioned as it can be easily overlooked. The principals were the designated leaders within the school. To be a leader, to *want* to be a leader implied certain traits of character. Though trait theories of leadership are currently not in vogue, it seemed that as different as each of these principals was in personality, they shared similarities. The trait that stood out most was their willingness to take on responsibility. These people have gravitated to positions of power which carries with it immense responsibility. Furthermore, these principals believed that they are capable. One principal, Mark, stated that, "(he) had a better personality to deal with it (the CI) than the majority of my staff." (P230L9-10)

Sometimes, the CI severely tested this self-belief but no one gave up his or her job. In fact, many believed that through the trials and hardships of the CI they had become stronger and better people. Alex expressed a common view:

> I guess I would have to say it's made me a stronger person because it was a major trauma and I got through it and I really had to lead the school at

> that time. You have to become strong for everybody else, so. So, like that old saying "Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger." And I think it did. You know, in some ways it . . . you realize that you can do a lot of things that you never thought you could do before. (P259L30-35)

Many of the principals made equally strong statements about their abilities and strengths. On the whole, these principals possessed good ego strength as one might expect of leaders.

As these principals wanted to lead, felt capable of leading, and were willing to take responsibility, to be effective they would still have to have the support of the led. In order to engender followership it is not enough to want to be a leader and have the title of principal. The strengths these principals exhibited and identified made them effective with their constituency. This included their ability to listen, show concern for others, and communicate effectively. Their staff knew they could talk to the principal. Most principals had an "open door" policy. Communications happened in person, formally (staff meetings), informally and through memos. The principals saw themselves as a key support person for the staff. The staff could "vent" or get council from the principal.

The desire to lead, leading, and engendering followership, leads to an effective principalship when supported by organizational ability. The ability to manage time became crucial for the overworked principal. Most principals coped with the work load by working long hours. A few focused on effectiveness of time management as the solution. Delegation was also mentioned as crucial to effective management and this was especially important during a CI. In order to delegate effectively the principals said they had to be able to first recognize the strengths of the people, the resources available, and then use these resources.

Upon examining the principals' strengths there is a clustering that occurs which

parallels Salovy and Meyer's (1990) typology of Emotional Intelligence, as depicted in Table 5.2. As previously mentioned, the level of confidence exhibited by the principals was impressive. Underlying this self-confidence was an awareness of one's strengths and limitations. Salovy and Meyer (1990) define this understanding as *self-awareness*.

Table 5.2 Domains of Emotional Intelligence and Principals' Strength

EQ Domains	Principals' Strengths
Self-Awareness	Self-Confidence (other attributes include humour and awareness of emotion as it happens in self and others –all principals demonstrated these qualities though they are not listed under strengths)
Self-Regulation	Coping ability Faith
Motivation	Willingness to Lead
Empathy	Willingness to Listen Ownership of School: Caring
Social Skill	Awareness of Role and Expectations Organizational Ability and Communication Skill Resource Recognition and Utilization

Though the individual capacities and self-awareness varied for each principal, all of them were able to either get the job done or delegate as needed. This may not be too surprising as one might assume that a criterion by which a person is chosen to be a principal is likely based on their ability to manage and complete tasks.

Furthermore, these principals volunteered to participate in a study that they probably suspected would be emotionally difficult (and it was) and this also points to their level of confidence. As indicated in the Table 5.2, other components of self-awareness included humour and the ability to understand one's feeling and drives and the effect one has on other people. Though not talked about specifically in this section the principals, without exception, demonstrated remarkable humour and were, if not always aware of their impact on others, constantly trying to gauge the impact of their decisions and some even went so far as to ask a trusted co-worker how they (the principal) came across in public.

At a deeper level, self-awareness of the felt state during a CI was very painful and after the initial news most principals put their felt state aside in order to manage the event. Awareness and experiencing of these emotional states typically occurred during a ritual (e.g., funeral, wakes, assemblies), with loved ones (spouse), with the counsellor, with staff and in moments of solitude and reflection. Furthermore, the principals were aware of their duties regarding both the management of the school as well as the duties of leading the school. This was accomplished by showing care and compassion, by pointing out the direction to go, and by fixing problems. All the principals were acutely aware of how the community was constantly evaluating their performance especially during a critical incident. The principals were also aware of the relationship between themselves, district office, staff and students.

A willingness to lead demonstrated the principals' *motivation*. The principals in this study appeared to be committed to the organization, had a strong desire to achieve, and were optimistic in spite of tragedy (even those principals that lost their optimism for

the future during the CI eventually regained it). Again, assuming the position of principal presupposes that the person is motivated to take on a leadership position.

Resource recognition and use, organizational ability, and communication skills reflect *social skills*. The greatest resource identified by the principals was people and the most effectively used processes were delegation, empowerment, and a team approach. These processes were further enhanced when the principal was open to receiving support and encouraged people who demonstrated leadership capacity. Having good communication and organizational skills were essential to managing a CI and consisted of both personal and interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skill encompassed the ability to communicate with school stakeholders in an empathic manner as well as the ability to assign tasks and delegate responsibilities. Personal skills included 1) time management, 2) writing skills, 3) self-confidence, and 4) the ability to project a vision or higher purpose.

In Table 5.2, ownership of the school, which included care of staff, students, and parents and the ability to listen are paired with the emotional intelligence (EQ). concept of *empathy*. Care was the underlying quality that drove the empathic state and seemed to originate in the principals' abilities to project or imagine the loss of a child from a parental perspective whether or not the principal had children. In many cases the feelings of loss did not have to be from an empathic position as the principal had a direct relationship – he or she lost a child they knew and cared for.

Caring for the school went beyond doing a good job; there was a personal element that reflected a parental relationship. The principals were caring and fiercely protective parents or guardians of the school. The welfare of the staff and students was the primary

concern of the principals and this was accomplished by creating an environment of security and caringness. This environment was nurtured by the principals' constant attention and engagement by listening to the students and staff. Students and staff could express their feeling and concerns and feel supported by their principal.

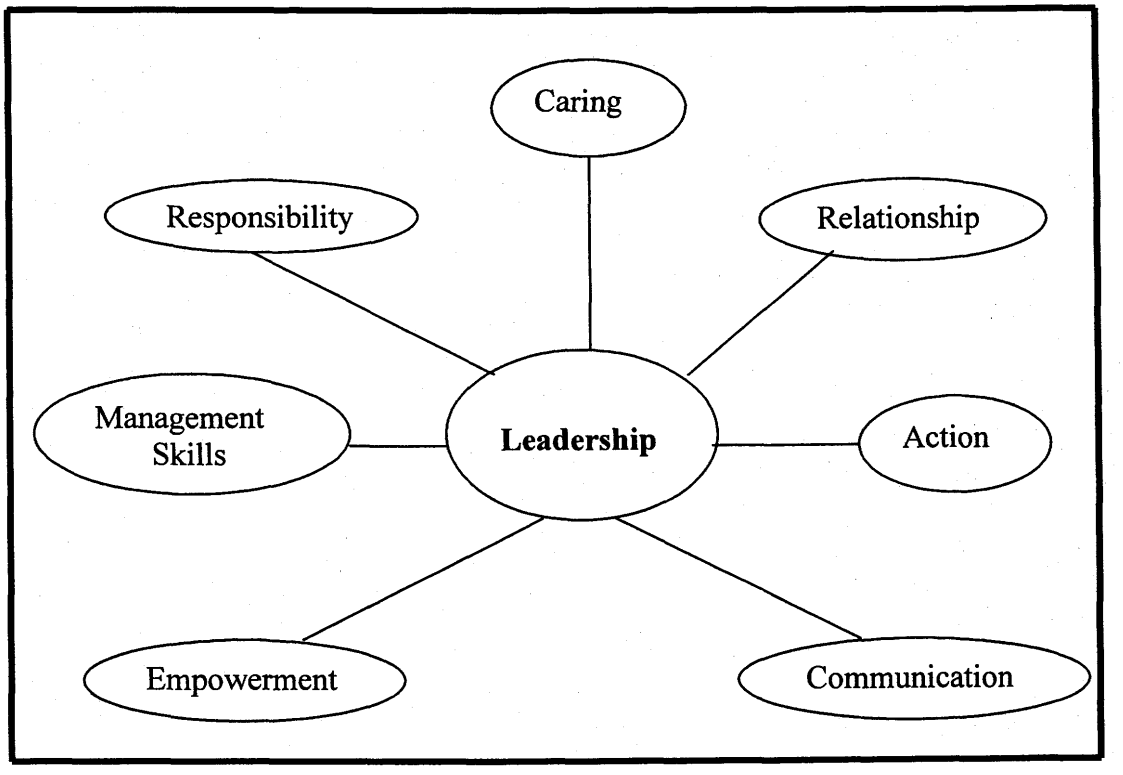
Self-regulation is the ability to cope effectively with strong and intrusive thoughts and feelings. In the Table 5.2 two elements in the principals' armamentarium contribute to this ability – faith and coping ability. Coping ability included specific skills in self-management including: the ability to compartmentalize, taking action, prayer, support seeking, and helping others. Faith gave direction and support when technique was inadequate. The most used coping technique used by the principals was taking action and this was aided by the ability to compartmentalize and put emotions to one side until a later time. Principals also helped themselves by helping others. Faith could be reflected in a specific religious set of beliefs or in a more general philosophical outlook. However, an intrinsic and deeply held position on the meaning of life and death was critical to the coping process and prayer, meditation, and reflection augmented this understanding.

Leadership Elements

The principals in this study are all leaders. They have their own individual leadership styles ranging from servant to classical. However, even though most principals used modern leadership styles (e.g., distributive, transformational), there was no uncertainty as to who was the leader in the school regardless of age or gender. As depicted in Figure 5.9, responsibility, communication, relationship, empowerment, caring, action and management skills were themes discussed when talking about leadership and leadership in times of crisis. The discussions about leadership not only

brought forth the topics mentioned above but inevitably led to an examination of what the principals had learned in their position as leader and what advice they had for other leaders. The following sections deal first with the constituent aspects of leadership identified by the participants and, second, with their learnings and, third, with advice for school leaders.

Figure 5.9 Constituent Elements of Leadership Identified by Principals



Responsibility

To be responsible is to be held accountable for one's actions and the person holding the title of principal is responsible for all that occurs within the school. As Alex said:

> You're responsible - you're the one - the buck stops here so to speak - if there's anything good or negative about the school, it always comes back to you. So you do get the feeling - and I think that's why Steven, you know, principals, when they say they don't miss much school - I think

> that's why. Because you just feel such responsibility - It's not good in a way, but you just feel, well, if I'm not there, you know, things won't work. So you tend to . . . be here too much. But certainly you feel a deep sense of - I think if you're a good principal you tend to feel a deep sense of responsibility to the students, to the parents, to the school. And that's certainly how I feel . . . the school becomes part of your name - I mean if your school is going good - it means you're doing your job well. It makes your whole life better. (laughs) (P282L13-24)

Sherri, the youngest principal, described in a humorous way her initiation into the world of responsibility during a critical incident.

> And they kind of put it all on you, so . . . you're the only one out here that does it, and . . . you're kind of put at the top of the responsibility list and - and afterwards it was kind of like - I don't know if I really want to be this responsible (laughter). (P291L21-24)

The principals in this study managed their responsibility in one of two ways; either by taking on an inordinate amount of tasks, or by delegating but without losing the sense of who was the captain of the ship. Both Henry and Paul identify their relationships with their staff as critical in their willingness to delegate and share responsibility.

> We were very good friends. And as a result of that it made it very easy to share responsibility and also to - sort of act as resources for each other and . . . supports for each other. (Henry, P199L33-35)

Paul talked about how this occurred at his school.

> The pressures of the job bring a closeness. We've been through lots here in this, this fall. With behaviors, with social services interventions, with a multitude of other things that go on in the day-to-day operations of the school. And if you work together as a school, you will ultimately share in responsibility and share in highs and lows and emotions with your colleagues. (P26L14-18)

Principals who had personal relationships with their staff were more willing to trust them and delegate responsibility. When responsibility was delegated, however, the process did not end. The principals continued to show their support and care of the teacher by ongoing monitoring and encouragement. I think it would be fair to say that

the principals viewed it as part of their responsibility to care and support the teachers, staff and parents. The following section further explores the principals' support for these major stakeholders of the school.

In the following quote, Allan was not at the school when he heard about the death. The sense of responsibility that he placed on himself is clear:

> My first reaction was "I got to get back to the school!" I got to get, I just got to get there, because the kids in this school knew me as the formal leader of the school and they need somebody to lead them through this. They need somebody that they, they trust will sort of know [laughs] I guess know what they're doing here. And whether I did or not is another issue. [laughs] (P84L1-5)

Paul was a bit more laconic and introspective in his approach:

> Yah, you do what you do. You do what you have to do. And . . . we've touched on this, this responsibility aspect, or, or care giving to others as just um [quiet] I just took it upon myself to show leadership I guess. That's why I do what I do. (P13L16-19)

Mark, who espoused the most traditional leadership style, felt the weight of responsibility yet was more than up to the task -- he relished it:

> I would say there's a very large responsibility on my shoulders and that's not fashionable nowadays. You are supposed to distribute those kinds of things. But I personally don't believe that. I think that it is the principal's responsibility. Certainly shared but, and he has the prime responsibility . . . . But, I think, we underestimate the importance of the school leader. We, and again, at the risk of being presumptuous, that we're more than just a facilitator. . . . it's much more than that. Leadership is not just facilitating. It's dealing with things, helping people in this case and, you know, just a range. I'll arrange for this, I'll arrange for this staff member to do this then I'll arrange for this. . . . I did it myself. And that is what everyone expected me to do as well. There was an expectation. That's what our principal will do. That's the way he is and that's the way we want him to be too. Doesn't mean he's more important it just means that they see him in that role -- that's his job. And it is very much a paternal role. I was a father figure in the school. And I think it's good. I suppose someone else could be a mother figure or something else. But in my case that's what I was. I helped kids grow up (chuckle) the best I could I guess. (P224L4-23)

The most important display of the principal's responsibility is to be present with the students as they process the CI. It is seen as part of the role of principal and there is an expectation as well from the community that the principal show leadership. Mark, in the quote above, compared this responsibility to that of being a parent in which the principal displays paternal or maternal responsibility towards the school and its inhabitants.

Communication

In order to carry out leadership functions, effective communication and teamwork is critical according to the principals. Allan summed up the majority opinion:

> The word "team"; and I think you need to be, you can't be the lone ranger on this one, you can't. If you try, I mean that's when your stress level is going to build and that's when, you know, people are going to feel left out in terms of communication and that's when I think some other stressors can come creeping in. Because as soon as staff feel not involved, not communicated with, they're not getting all the information, they feel isolated; and I think the last thing that people need to feel, through a critical incident, is isolated. People need to feel part of something better, and, and I think we achieved [this] by, by just sort of through the meetings and the communications that we have, so I'd say that, you know, communication is, is a strength of mine and like I say, I usually err of the side of too much communication, I try and use different modes of communication and provide opportunities for people to communicate back. We've got an open door policy in the school. (P121L33-P122L9)

Paul talked about some of the formal expectations regarding communication that the leader must attend to:

> I believe there's some formal expectations in terms of communication with the media, communication with the parents who are asking about circumstances or that role is ultimately your role as administrator at the school. I think mostly those are the official ones or what you accept in your job description and position. I think there was also some informal or incidental expectations that I would be an organizer and so there were those types of things too. (P20L21-27)

When discussing communication most principals talked about communication with teachers and staff. However communication included the whole community as when

Alex talked about the importance of his newsletter. "Communication is very important . . . it's very critical. So I normally send out newsletters." (P278L6-9) Furthermore, communication involves head office, media, and the board. It would seem that good communication avoids feelings of isolation while promoting involvement and dissemination of information.

Relationship/connection

The principals talked about how effective communication was enhanced when they were connected with and had relationships with others. Furthermore, being connected helped create a supportive and caring environment in the school and the community. One connection that was frequently mentioned was through sports. Many principals had been coaches and this gave them an added experience of the students and parents. Another place of connection was in the Church. Any community participation typically put the principal in contact with parents in a different relationship other than as the "principal." Tony mentioned some of these connections:

> The other thing is living in this community. I've lived in this area for close to 20 years and knowing a lot of the other families that both deaths affected through hockey connections, through coaching connections, through church connections, what ever. [pause] I could see how both of these deaths affected the different families in the community. (P370L9-13)

Mark mentioned "the sports connection too, heh. We had a very athletic school." (P217L21-22) This was an important aspect for Mark as he is very involved (connected) with his students through athletics and when one of his star athletes was murdered this concern spilled over to the younger brother of the deceased. The younger brother idolized his brother's sports prowess and as Mark said, "I took it upon myself to make sure that I connected with him." (P229L5-6) As the principal, Mark would probably have noted the

need to watch out for any difficulties this young man was having, but, Mark had a personal relationship with the deceased which made him feel the need to take the extra step and personally connect on an ongoing basis.

Another example of the extension of a connection onto other people occurred with Susan. She talked about a new student with whom she had little contact but her niece knew this student from a different school; "so I knew about this kid coming over. . . . Somehow there's always a connection, so that helped." (P133L15-17) This is an example of a tenuous connection that the principal used to enhance her ability to support the students.

Tony talked about the dynamic and resulting effects of working with someone over time and the resulting relationship:

> It's like a family member passing away. Because, you know, you think about it - for 10 months of the year we're with these people probably more than we are with our spouses sometimes. You know, through the teaching - we're here with them for, whatever, seven hours a day and sometimes weekends and evenings with extra-curricular activities. So you do make that really close personal connection. So when someone like that dies, it's like losing a family member for sure. (388L18-24)

Paul echoed a similar sentiment when talking about a teacher who died and the effect on him and his staff.

> We have been a very, very close group of people [pause] since [pause] all of this - have a bond there. Even some of the ladies who have retired since, there's a connection. I'm sure we don't go - remember Mrs. H's death thing, but . . . in our long-term memories, but there, there's a connection with the eye contact that. . . . We've been through stuff together and there's, there's an intimacy and, and a comrade, comradeship that will be there. (P13L23-30)

It is evident from these quotes that close relationships were made over time between principals and their staff and students. Many hours of working together create bonds similar to that of family and when one of those bonds is severed by death, it is like losing

a family member. Furthermore, during a critical incident involving a death(s) the principal, because of the connections established, felt a great responsibility to the community both professionally and personally. This sense of responsibility is explored in the following section.

Empowerment

Empowerment was an important area of leadership for the majority of principals. Tony felt that empowering others "showed the type of leadership that we have, or that I try to portray at the school in that we empower and we lean on people and we work with people." (P395L2-4) Allan discovered that the CI propelled him to empower others:

> I probably empowered my staff more than I ever have in this situation because I just didn't feel that I could do it all, and that was a real, that was a real learning experience for me, and I think consequently I do that more now in other areas as well, I think. And they feel, they feel maybe a little bit more empowered, so. I think the crisis definitely pulled us together a little bit more as a staff . . . We have people who talk to each other more now than maybe they did before. (P99L23-29)

Alex empowered others through his distributed form of leadership and collaborative style:

> [I] lead by example - collaboration - like I don't like to direct from the top down . . . I do a good job of it, but certainly my staff all have good ideas and are good people you know - I like to do things on a consensus from my staff rather than, you know, kind of bottom up rather than top down. (P279L20-24)

For some principals empowering others was part of their leadership philosophy. For others it became part of their philosophy during a CI, which forced upon them the need to access the support of their staff as the principals realized that they would not be able to manage without help. Through the process of empowering others, it seemed that principals were aware of, or became aware of, the depth of resources that were available and the willingness of staff to be supportive.

Action in CIs

Whatever the leadership style, principals were clear on one thing, leadership is an action word. It is not a passive state. Susan pointed this out when she said it's:

> An action. It's a, a being, a doing. . . it's doing, being, acting. It's not a passive verb. (P168L23-26)

Henry took this concept a step further when he identified his need to be part of the action as a component of his skill set as a principal:

> If people were to sort of be asked some of my skill sets, and I were asked what my strengths were – probably, interpersonal skills, probably, ability to be a leader; probably organizational ability; written skills and so on. Plus the desire to, I guess, to be in the action so to speak. (202L8-11)

Finally, Paul encapsulated the ideas of leadership, discussed by many of the principals, when he examined the concepts of respect, teamwork and empowerment that demonstrated leadership at its best:

> One of the most important things to me is that we all are treated the same . . . regardless of the position in the school; teacher assistants, teachers attend meetings, social events. Everybody is included. Our caretaker when we go out for pizza, our secretary, our support people . . . we all do the same things. . . . Team work is one of the most important things to having a successful school, in my mind. If staff are happy and supported, the end product with the children will be superior if you work in a supportive environment. My job is to have each person in this building, self-actualize. And if I can make them self actualize . . . set things up for each person to maximize their professional well being and their feeling about themselves we will ultimately have a building that is caring and maximizes resources for the kids. It's a philosophical approach; some of its personal and certainly some is through my approach to running an organization or running a school. (P26L24-P27L3)

Action was an integral aspect of leadership. A leader acts by analysing situations, making decisions, and delegating responsibilities. Another action that a leader engages in is the empowerment of staff by creating a supportive environment where self-actualization is possible.

Management skills

Time management, organizational and writing ability, and the ability to create and manage a team approach to the CI were the most talked about management skills. These skills were also discussed under the theme *Principals' Strengths* and in the areas of resource recognition and use and organizational ability. The CI forced many activities into a short span of time with high stress levels and as Allan said, "time management skills become very important." (P109L28-29) Henry specifically identified organizational ability and written skills as important and Paul concurred as he talked about how he had made a "template" (P7L39) that was very specific and described who did what and when. Similarly, Maria talked about the need to gather her staff together and "organizing who's going to be responsible for what." (P47L8)

Allan said that there is "a lot of written communication" (P86L37) and this occurred through memos to staff and Alex used newsletters to keep parents informed. Part of the purpose of extensive communication with staff was to encourage and support the "team" (P108L19) by keeping them informed and part of the process. Tony talked about how important it was to rely on people, "tap into those people's strengths" (P380L3-4) and "to delegate and empower." (P379L35) Maria, similarly, talked about the "team approach . . . you rely on the strength of your staff members." (P57L5-6) The conceptualizing, organizing and supporting a team takes great management skills.

Caring

Caring in leadership is critical for the development of a healthy school. Paul talked about the need, "to be just a team player and caring person for everybody." (P28L33-34) Having the element of care in the school organization made the school a

humane environment that promoted healing during and after a CI. Caring was evident with Henry's long-term efforts to assist in the recovery from anorexia of one of his students and the subsequent disappointment with her death. Care was evident throughout the years Allan spent talking with Shauna as she slowly became more and more incapacitated. Susan demonstrated care when she reminded herself that her teacher's down mood was due to the anniversary of the death of the his child. Alex shows care when he takes flowers to the grave of a student every year. Care was demonstrated when principals listened to their counsellors advice even when it went against what the principal thought was the correct way to manage. Care was demonstrated every time a principal went to the grief stricken family and offered condolences. Care was demonstrated by squelching rumours as fast as possible, keeping the staff informed, and communicating to the community the school's position and activities. Care was demonstrated every day throughout the CI as the principal monitored and interacted with the staff and students to assist them to cope with feelings and unanswerable questions. The idea of a caring principal, and thus a caring leader, was important as when, for example, Susan stated that appearing uncaring due to competence when managing a CI was to be avoided, "And the biggest mistake I think we made . . . is not showing that it does bother us." (P172L23-25).

Summary of leadership

The active display of these heretofore mentioned qualities and skills is leadership. All the principals were aware of the concept of leadership but some were more cognizant of this than others. This may have been a function of whether or not the principal was teaching, and how much, and their educational level. Had they been exposed to higher

order concepts of leadership, which those with Master's degrees had been?

The elements of leadership identified by the principals' included: caring, relationship, action, communication, empowerment, management skills, and responsibility. Caring was demonstrated in action by talking to students and teachers who needed someone to listen to their concerns, being organized and on top of the situation so that others felt as if someone knew what they were doing, visiting the parents of the deceased, speaking at school assemblies, and being directly involved with the counselling and of students in crisis. All the principals, regardless of leadership style or philosophies of leadership appeared to care deeply for the people in the school.

Another strongly held tenet focused on the issue of responsibility. These principals all felt a strong responsibility for the well-being of the school and all elements that affected their school. It was acknowledged that being responsible was part of the job description but the principals in this study exhibited a level of responsibility that went beyond the call of duty. They owned their responsibility in personal and heartfelt ways. This responsibility brought out a primal protectiveness that was described as maternal or paternal.

Caring and responsibility formed the foundation from which the other elements of leadership were played out in the world. Effective communication was stressed in order to keep the staff up to date on the facts, what needed to be done and the progress of the situation. Communication kept the staff feeling connected and part of process that shows direction and care. Good communication promoted understanding, inclusiveness, and, at times of crisis, a feeling of hope for the future.

Communication was enhanced when positive relationships existed between the

principal and his or her staff and students. The message was more easily heard, understood and incorporated when there was a positive relationship. Being effective at relationships allowed the principal to sense more quickly the mood of the people in the school and act accordingly. It also allowed openness so that communication was a two-way process with the subsequent benefits including a team spirit, direction of purpose and avoidance of feelings of helplessness.

In order to achieve effective leadership, effective communication and teamwork was seen as being critical. Allan summed up the majority opinion when he talked about the "team" and the importance of communicating clearly and regularly so that members of the team do not feel left out or unclear as to what was expected. Effective communication also enhanced the sense of team or community and promoted cohesiveness while avoiding isolation. As Allan said, "people need to feel part of something better." (P122L3) And even though hope, as such, was never discussed, is this not what Allan was offering - the hope of a better future? The hope of successfully navigating the painful events of a CI and of navigating the storm and successfully reaching safe haven was what the principal held up for the school.

Effective communication was not simply a mater of 'what' but also 'how'. Again, Allan discussed a conscious effort on his part to learn about and enhance his people skills. He had already identified his strengths as being on the organizational side of the equation and realized that development of the people aspect of leadership was essential.

Empowerment was a concept that many principals felt was an effective process for the enhancement of the organization and an aspect or function of leadership. Hand-

in-hand with this concept was the idea of distributed leadership. As people are empowered they become more capable of taking on more leadership roles and functions. This resulted in a better use of skills available and a lessening of the burden on the principal.

Most principals in this study actively empowered their staff. They looked for assistance from those teachers that displayed leadership potential or expertise that would be helpful in a crisis situation. This sometimes occurred out of necessity (i.e., the CI was too big to handle solo), personal style which was collaborative by nature, or the incorporation of what the principal learned through experience or at graduate school.

Having management skills increased the principal's effectiveness when a CI occurred. Effective time management, writing skills and the ability to manage people were indispensable skills for reducing stress and supporting a positive outcome. Needless to say, not everyone in the study had high-level skills in these areas but, they all recognized the value of such skills. Team building was also identified as an important management skill, so as to take advantage of the skills and talents of those people in the school.

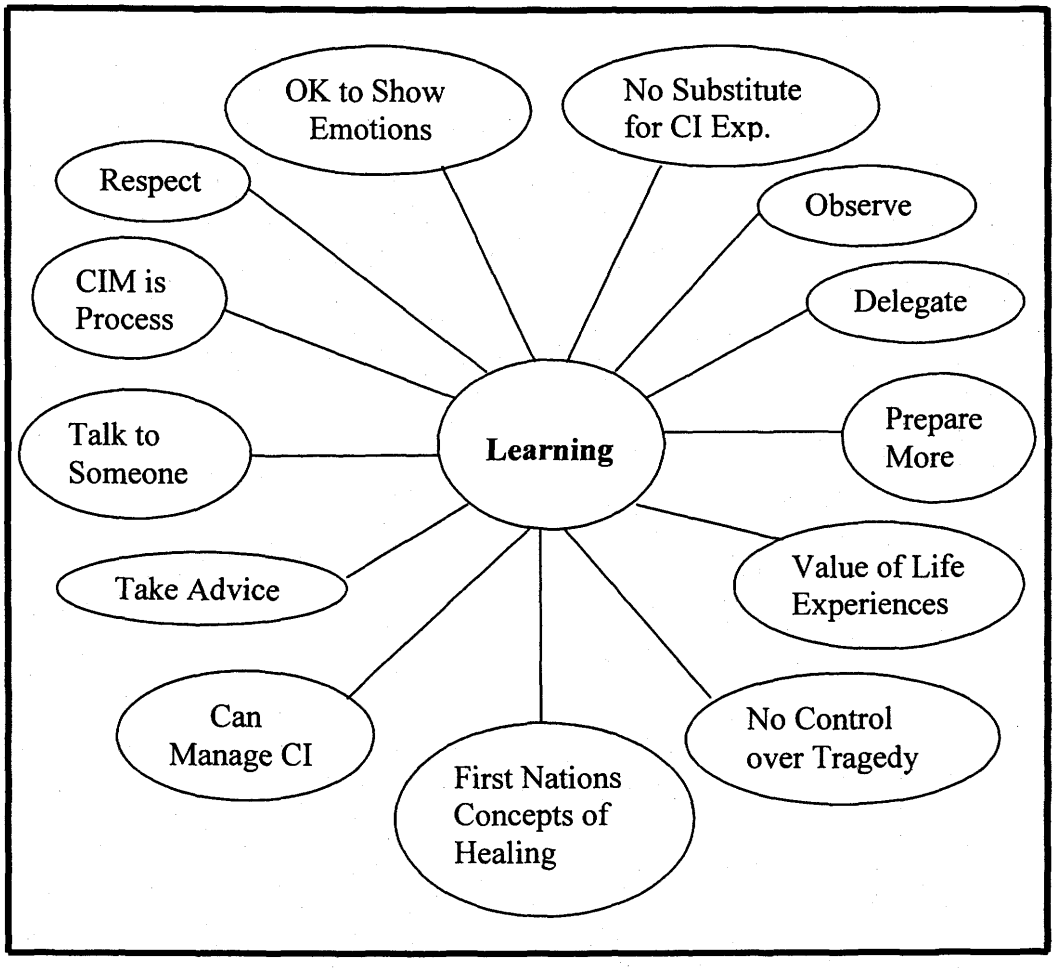
Finally, none of these elements occurred without the principals' willingness to take action. Accomplishing all the goals of effective leadership was not a passive state of being. As Susan pointed out, leadership is an "action" word and not a passive word. This was abundantly reflected in the descriptions of day-to-day and crisis activities that principals engaged in. However, it was the principal who planned ways of empowering others, distributed leadership, created CI teams, and practiced for critical incidents. These activities demonstrated thoughtful leadership. Typically, once the CI had

occurred, there was little time for thoughtful reflection.

Learning

Principals learned by observing others, being in the experience of the CI, and from the suggestions given by students, staff and community members. As depicted in Figure 5.10 they learned that they could not control the tragedy, could have been better

Figure 5.10 What the Principals Learned



prepared, and that getting support and advice were important. The principals learned the importance of respecting the experience of others, that showing emotions was okay, and the value of incorporating First Nations concepts of healing. Principals learned the value

of delegating, that they could manage a critical incident, and that managing a CI was a process. The principals also stated that they learned how their past life experiences prepared them for effective CI management. Also, those that had CI experience, remarked on how what they had learned previously aided them in current CI management and that there was no substitute for real life experience. The following are quotes from the principals on the topics that they identified as areas of learning.

Observational learning

Learning by observation goes back to infancy, but we seem less inclined to use this method of learning as we get older. I stayed and observed one of the principals over a two-day period after the interview. He was constantly in the halls watching students and teachers go about their day. He was able to get a feel for the mood of the school as well as check out the maintenance of the structure and actively projected his presence into the school while interacting with students and teachers every day. He did not have to rely completely on the observations of others to tell him how the school was doing. He knew because he saw with his own eyes.

Susan watched and learned from others as indicated in the following quote:

> I watched how . . . other people acted . . . I think I've learnt some skills from being a principal because I've watched . . . I watched and I thought, 'Those are such good qualities.' (P167L1-5)

During the interview process principals were highly attuned and observant to what was happening in their school. They were like ever watchful guardians even though focused on their conversation with me.

Respect

It would be safe to say that all the principals were respectful of people. Tony

showed this when he said:

> And that's one of the things that I learned from those other incidents is that, you know, you really have to respect the feelings, the privacy of - whatever word you want to use - of the individuals that this is directly affecting. (P393L29-32)

However, respect for others was not just a good idea, it needed to manifest itself in action and it took sensitivity to know when others were being ignored in some way. Even though the principals were busy they had to be constantly on guard to not get caught up with all their duties, especially paperwork, and forget to look up and see the people who make the school function. The principals in this study constantly referred to treating all staff members as equals, from the janitor to the vice principal.

OK to show emotion

Tony talked about the positive outcome from expressing emotion in front of others while managing the CI when he said:

> I learned that the dealing with these things are difficult, you know, and that its, its okay to show the emotion and its okay to feel hurt and its okay to be sad and its okay to show that you're sad . . . There's nothing wrong with that and that's part of getting through it is to be able to deal with those emotions and to be able to deal with those feelings . . . if you can deal with those feelings and emotions, it's going to help you get through it and you carry on. (P397L1-7)

As stated previously, this was a change of direction for him, as in the past he would not have displayed his emotions in a public manner. Many principals displayed emotions at the funeral and some at staff meetings. However, none of these displays were considered wrong or inappropriate.

First Nations concepts of healing

Concepts of healing from the First Nations were mentioned by three principals as useful and these applied directly in two of the schools. Tony worked in an urban setting

with minimal contact with First Nations groups (though he worked in an inner city school in the past and had extensive contact and experience with this population) but incorporated certain indigenous healing practices when managing the CI. Tony discovered the value of these concepts and said that, "We can learn so much from the Aboriginal community."(P397L15) He used the idea of the healing circle in the classrooms to talk about a teacher that had died. Mark, on the other hand, worked in a rural school close to two reservations and had close ties with both communities. He was able to elicit their support when tragedy struck as he had access to "the elders." (P222L40) Maria's (the principal from the band school) school had recently incorporated traditional healing practices as an option for her students. Her school now has a separate space in one of the "portables" (P45L38) for students to go and think and pray for the deceased. Maria's community is Anglican and yet she found that the traditional aboriginal wisdom and healing practices had a place in her school.

Value of life experiences

The average age of the principals was forty-six years and they had been working in their school systems for approximately 20 years. In this time a certain perspective on the events and life of school had been internalized. As Henry said:

> You recognize your failures, you know, but you don't let the failures rule your life . . . you turn them around into a sort of learning experience. You can laugh at the dumb mistakes you make and move on. (P206L35-P207L2)

Some principals have managed many CIs and they tend to have the most perspective on that issue. Generally speaking, the more experience the principals had with a CIs the more they came to understand the process and their responses to it.

Can manage a critical incident

The major learning about self that the principals talked about was the discovery that they could indeed manage a CI as indicated in the following quotes:

> Alex: And you learn - you know, you learn a lot about yourself, I guess, mental toughness. (P250L12-13)

> Bob: Maybe a little more confidence as to, you know, your abilities and what you're capable of doing and what you're not capable of doing. (P341L1-2)

> Alex: First time I'd ever had to do something like that, you know. Like do a eulogy at such an emotional time. I wasn't sure I could do it (P250L11-12) . . . . with Harry laying in the coffin four feet away and just, you know, the whole mix of emotions a few days later. Getting through that gives you strength. All those things, I guess, after the fact I realized, "I did this." There's not too many things I shouldn't be able to handle. (P260L9-13)

> Allan: I learned that I could do it. (P118L9)

> Bob: Probably learning that you're stronger than you think you are, you know, when it comes down to it. Like, I went through a couple incidents before then and they were tough to get through, but this...when you're pushed, usually most people are strong enough that they can, you know, survive and do what needs to be done and those types of things. (P359L12-16)

When in the process, especially for inexperienced principals, some of them had serious doubts about their abilities. However, after having survived the incident, a new found realization of their abilities was apparent.

No control over tragedy

One of the more difficult aspects of managing a critical incident was the realization that one had little control over certain aspects of the event. Alex said that he:

> learned that . . . you can't really control this situation . . . . (P252L2) you can't control everything in your school. . . . (P254L31-32) these are things I couldn't control and we just did the best we could with them (P272L11)

Tony stated that, "with any of these incidents you don't have any control over it."

(P404L20-21) Furthermore, the lack of control was generalized to all critical incident events, not just a murder. Maria, when talking about her interactions with the two girls that died in a fire said, "I tried so hard to change, to make or create change for these girls, but that never happened. And uh, it's just, you don't always have control over that; you can only do so much." (P44L28-31) This was a difficult learning for many principals. They were so accustomed to being in control that when confronted with their inability to control the occurrence of a CI, disequilibria occurred. This may have been why there is an almost instantaneous reaction to start taking concrete steps to feel in control and not be at the mercy of the critical incident.

No substitute for CI experience

The principals were quite clear as to the value of experience in managing a CI. Paul said that, you "build strength, I think, from experience." (P16L35-P17L1) and "the experience enables you to be resourceful or to be, effective in other situations." (P17L5-6) Susan talked directly to the issue of experience when she said, "having gone through it once – cause I think experience always helps." (P155L21-22) Alex, on the other hand, brought another perspective on the issue:

> I learnt a lot . . . the whole staff learnt a lot. But you know you can learn all you want, you can be as prepared as you think you can be, and that's good. But when it happens, you'll scramble. You'll scramble. (P253L2-4)

It would seem that previous CI experience was valuable but the highly unpredictable nature of critical incidents pointed to the inability to be completely prepared either emotionally or logistically.

Talk to someone

As self-sufficient as many of the principals were, they found out during a CI that

having someone to confer with was helpful on many fronts (management and personal issues). Alex addressed this particular point when he said, "I tend to work things through myself. I learned at that time it's nice to talk to someone occasionally or a friend if you need to." (P280L4-5) This key person(s) typically would be the counsellor, friend, or family member.

Take advice

Taking advice points to the need these principals had to stay open to the ideas and suggestions of others including, students, staff and community members. As Allan said:

> Not ever having gone through an incident like this before I mean it was a real learning experience for me . . . taking advice from my counsellor and taking advice from the clergy and what they had to say, and taking advice from parents and then trying to make all this work. (P76L4-7)

Principals with little or no experience with a CI were open to taking advice from their support personnel. Principals with more experience would phrase this differently and talk about working with or consulting with their support people.

Delegate

The principals seemed to realize the importance of delegating tasks, though some have difficulty doing this, as was the case with Allan:

> I've probably learned to rely on the people around me a little bit more. I have a tendency to do things myself cause, of course, nobody can do it better than me . . . this was one of those situations where in terms of, of delegating what needed to be done, or trusting in people's judgments and letting them do, you know, after you've talked about it at the staff level - trust them to go off and, and do what we talked about. I probably empowered my staff more than I ever have in this situation because I just didn't feel that I could do it all, and that was a real, that was a real learning experience for me, and I think consequently I do that more now in other areas as well, I think. And they feel, they feel maybe a little bit more empowered, so. I think the crisis definitely pulled us together a little bit more as a staff . . . we have people who talk to each other more now than maybe they did before. They saw a different side of people. And even though, again, we're, we're not that big a school, we're not that big a

> community, people have a tendency to stay within their own social groups, and I think that was good for us. Just in terms of the whole process of dealing with community, staff, students, and I guess even though family is part of the community, all of those different groups at once! I'd never really done anything like that before at this level. I mean, yah we have open houses and we have things that we bring people into the school for, but not like this, though. This was different. And that really gave me an appreciation for working with different groups and the importance of listening to everybody before you sort of made final decisions. (P99L18-39)

Bob, on the other hand, had no qualms about delegating:

> Delegation for sure; you're not going to be able to do it yourself . . . and I'm glad I was able to delegate and people came forward and stepped forward. Cause that would have made it way different if you had to do everything. I think that would be one of the things that I learned, that I was lucky in that sense, you know, that, that if you had to do everything it would be very, very difficult. (P359L5-10)

In order to rely on others the principal has to trust that people can do the job. Whether it is a principal's preferred style to delegate or not, when confronted with a CI, it becomes clear very quickly that accepting support and delegating tasks is more efficient and inclusive than trying to fly solo.

Prepare more

This sentiment, preparing more, was mentioned by a number of principals. Allan said:

> I would prepare myself a little bit more if it was a situation like what we had. I mean I knew this was coming. I knew this was coming and I had this book. I had this book that I could've, I could've been thorough and I could've had my plan in place - I didn't. (P100L1-4)

Some principals actively avoided preparation and ongoing training. They realized that this was detrimental to their organization but avoidance of the possibility of grievous harm occurring in their school was a topic easily put aside. Alex, for example, avoided

these situations because it was reminded of a past incident, others, simply because it was uncomfortable in a generalized and unspecified way.

Critical incident management is a process

The principals with the most experience were aware of the process of the event. They had gone through it many times and knew, more or less, what to expect. Allan talked about this:

> I learned. . . there is a process. There are some very concrete things that you could do, and probably should do (P118L20-22). . . . I learned just from going through it that I would never have thought of or wouldn't even really thought would work. And now I know they do work (e.g., holding an assembly in the gym to all students to announce the death). (P119L22-24)

Knowing that the CI was a process with a beginning, middle and end and was survivable gave the principals confidence in managing the people and the inevitable tasks along the way.

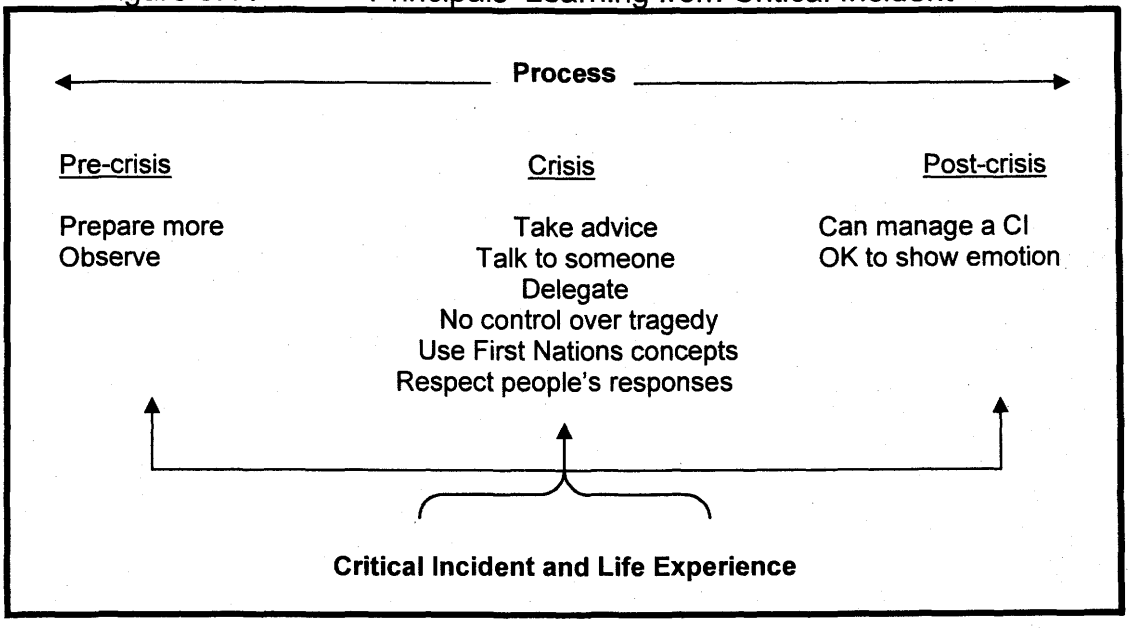
Summary of principals learning

As experienced as many of the principals were, it was refreshing to hear that they all valued the learning process not only for their students but also for themselves. Most had received advanced degrees, one was in a doctoral program and ongoing studies were seen as advantageous. Learning was seen as not only coming from books or institutions but also from life. Experience was seen as a most vital and important area.

When examining the learnings that the principals expressed, they could be divided into the three stages of a critical incident: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. The stages and the learnings are depicted in the Figure 5.11 below. The pre-crisis stage reflected the need to prepare more for the possibility of a CI. This included making sure a crisis team was in place, up-do-date, and practiced the procedures as stated in an up-to-date manual.

According to some principals this process should happen on an annual basis and not be overlooked, as is sometimes the tendency especially for principals who have had negative emotional experiences from previous CIs. The other learning in the pre-crisis stage was the necessity to constantly and intently observe the school environment. Much can be learned from the staff in how to handle situations and from the students as to their overall abilities and moods. This knowledge can be drawn upon and used during a crisis.

Figure 5.11 Principals' Learning from Critical Incident



The learning that occurs during the crisis includes: taking advice, talking to someone for support and feedback, delegating, realizing that there is no control over an event happening at different times during the process, using First Nations concepts to help in the healing process, and the importance of having respect for everyone experience however different from one's own expectations.

Taking advice was easy for principals who were predisposed to a collaborative leadership style. The advice concerning this topic came from principals that would not

normally have relied on others as much and it was a revelation to them to discover the support, and the quality of support, that was available but for the asking.

Similarly, those principals who had extensive support networks and openness to sharing feelings easily sought out support as needed. Those principals who were more self-sufficient and tending to keep their experience to themselves learned the value of having someone to bounce ideas off of and get emotional support.

Delegating was seen as an important function during the process of managing a CI. One principal went so far as to say that without delegating the CI could not be handled effectively. Furthermore, the principal that does not delegate is placing an unreasonable burden on him or herself.

A principal's life at school can often revolve around creating and maintaining control, whether real or perceived. A CI shatters this illusion, for both the principal and the community; yet the principal felt the immediate need to re-establish control over events and create a sense of security and direction for the school. However, death in the school (other than from a long-term illness) is a sudden and often unexplainable loss of a person's life and loss of control. It was important for the principals that they recognize that this would happen. It was an uncomfortable experience. As much as the principal would try to control events after the initial incident there were more surprises along the way. Knowing this the principals expressed the need to maintain a flexible and open attitude when managing a CI.

First Nations concepts of healing were used in two schools to augment the students' recovery process. The principal at one school was particularly impressed with effectiveness of the healing circle and how well it was accepted with a non-aboriginal

population. At the band school, native healing practices have been integrated in recent years along with western recovery techniques so that the students have the option to choose which style they prefer. Also, a separate space was established to enhance a feeling of privacy, safety and the acknowledgement of the importance of healing.

Finally, the concept of respect was identified as a quality that the principal should have in order to appreciate the uniqueness of the individual process of experiencing a tragedy. It was important not to prejudge or overlay ones beliefs onto others experience or grieving process.

The post-crisis learning most typically identified was "I survived and I didn't know if I could do it." Principals looking back at their first CI usually made this kind of statement. The CI was trying and emotionally draining experience and if in the first CI the principal was trying to do the right thing, when they did not know what that was, it added more stress to an already stressful event. There were times for a couple of principals when they seriously doubted their capacity to manage effectively. Having gotten through the event and realized that they could indeed manage the CI was a major boost to the principals' self-confidence. Also, the learnings from the first incident were applied to subsequent CI planning.

The other learning at the post-crisis stage was that it was OK to show emotion. This was a major turn-around in presentation style and beliefs about emotion and emotional expression for Tony. He found this new style to be effective even though counter-intuitive. The expression of emotion did not lead to a loss of control. In fact, it led to an increased closeness with students and staff and a healthy resolution of his feeling for the deceased. Other principals also mentioned the various points at which

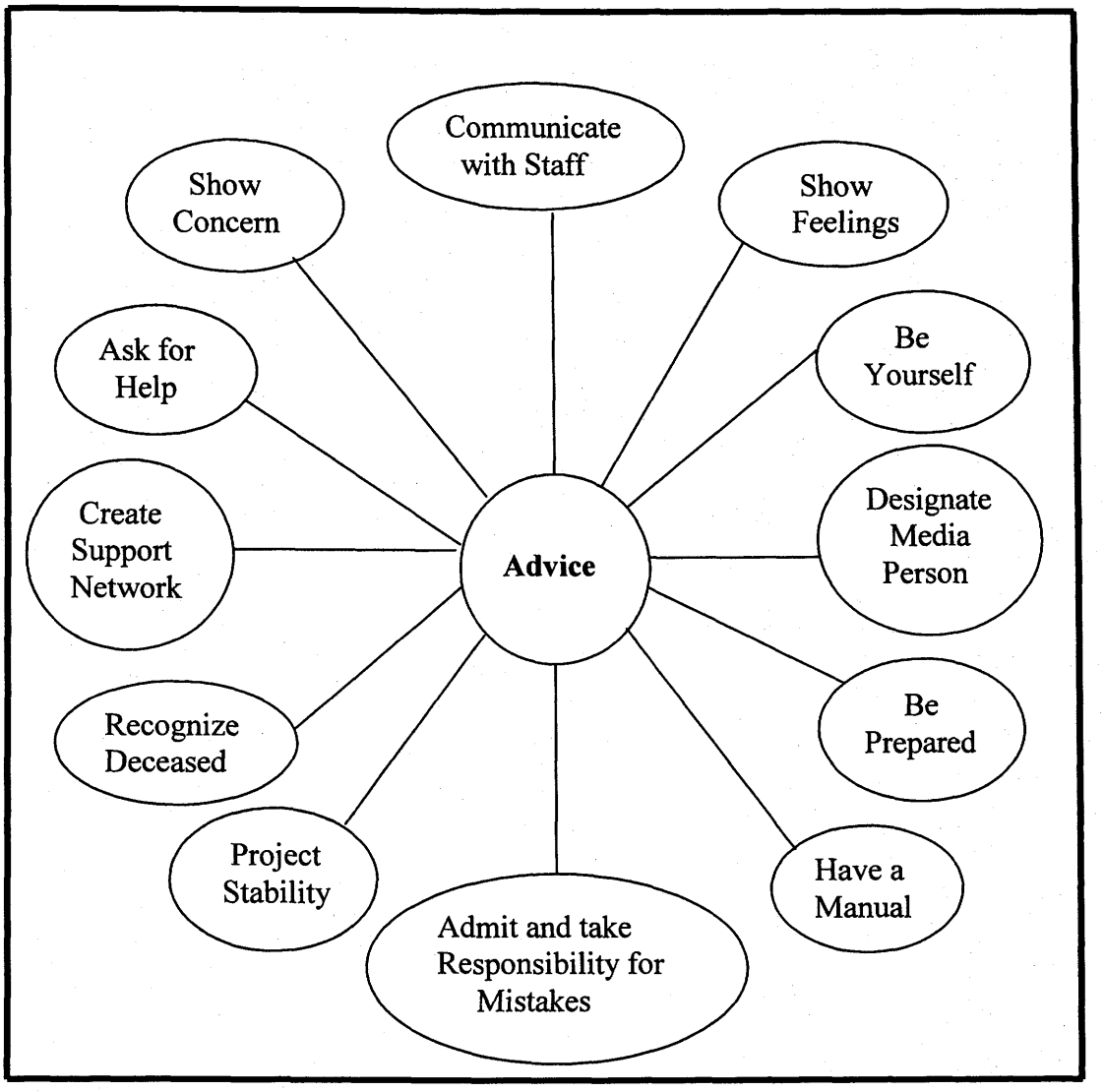
they displayed emotions, which felt appropriate for them including, staff meetings, funerals and sometimes at assemblies. However, Tony was the only principal who experienced this fundamental shift in his relationship with emotion and managing a CI.

At the macro level three aspects become apparent; one, the process, two, the application of one's experience to the event and three, having perspective. These three learnings are intricately entwined. At the top of Figure 5.11 the process arrow moves from left to right encompassing the beginning, middle, and end of the CI. At the bottom, the principals' experience and perspective influence all the elements of the CI process at all three phases. The principals' perspective and experience interacted and influenced their experience of the process and the process itself. Having had previous experience with a CI makes it easier (though not a certainty) to have a perspective on the process. Also, previous life events could assist the principal in maintaining perspective.

Principals' Advice

Figure 5.12 depicts the advice proffered by the principals. The suggestions range from the simple "say thank you" to the complex, "have a good network." Having a written policy or manual and establishing an extensive network were the most cited suggestions. When asked for their advice, the principals were hesitant to volunteer what they found useful. There was the sense that each situation was unique and their advice may not be valid for any particular event.

Figure 5.12 Principals' Advice



Network

Sherri, Mark and Bob talked about the importance of having a good network of contacts and support people.

> Probably just that you have a good network set up. Our school division is fine but I know lots of public schools especially the school divisions aren't - they're very - they're even more isolated. Like we're part of our school division we - we're principals of the division, we have principal meetings with other principals . . . we're not segregated per se - but some colonies I mean those people never see anybody else all year. . . they're not involved with the administration part of this it kind of thing and - I think just to

> make sure that in each situation that each school division that that doesn't happen that there's always some sort of network beyond your school that because when there is so few staff you don't get that. And I think larger schools just don't understand that a lot of the time. (Sherri: P308L1-11)

> It might be a good idea for young and upcoming principals to build a school network where they could rely and tap the resources of other people. . . build your own team within the school. . . you could have the experience perhaps of older staff members and experienced staff members and perhaps members who are more intuitive and perhaps compassionate . . . . Of all of these various qualities and then you could form some kind of loose framework so that you could deal with it. Deal with what ever happens. (Mark: P232L5-18)

> Support network . . . if you can find some time just figure out who are the reliable people in my life here to get you through this. I think that would be the big issue. (Bob: P363L31-33)

Another form of networking could be amongst the principals as Allan suggested:

> If it happens or if a principal phoned me. You know, like if something happened down in Haney, and I know he's never been through anything like that and he's saying "Man, Charlie. What would I do?" or "What should I do?" I can say, "Look it. This is what we did and this is what worked." And if I would've had another principal that I knew I could have contacted and said, you know "What kind of things did you do when this happened?" Having that reassurance from a fellow administrator who's lived through it and who knows how that would, sort of integrate with the day-to-day running of his or her school I think would have been valuable. (P119L27-35)

Creating networks was considered one of the key areas in the effective management of CIs. The networks can be inside the school and outside. Inside, the principal should first identify key people who have skills needed in emergency situations. This would include teachers with past CI experience and those who are naturally compassionate and have open relationships with the students. Another support network mentioned was among principals. Exterior networks included the board, community members, band office, and community emergency responders (police, fire, and hospital).

Manual

Bob, Paul, Allan, and Maria mentioned the importance of having a CI manual. Along with networking, having a manual was considered one of the most important elements for successful CI management.

Maria's manual was not available in the first incident and a preliminary document was used in the second incident, which she found extremely useful:

> If I look back at what I have now – even though it's a draft – I think I feel a lot more confident that there are actually things there that I could read and see. You know, what type of procedure I need to follow. . . . (P42L4-7) And having a policy or a manual or something directly in place to guide you, it just obviously has to be a better situation. (P42L23-24)

In the following examples, note the appreciation and value that was described by having a manual:

> Having - your protocol in print. That's number one I think. . . . (P364L1-2) Have a written policy. We were lucky. Have something there, because to figure all that out you, you don't know where to turn. But it was all there. Or most of the guidelines. You, you have to make (up) a few here and there, but most of that was in print, which was really nice. (Bob, P344L21-24)

> The tragic events manual that we followed was absolutely a God-send. Because the details that it has suggested,. . . It was really a phenomenal reference for looking after everything that needed to be looked after. No two incidents would be the same, but it was so helpful. I wouldn't have been able without it on the table. (Paul, P32L7-12)

> Make sure you've got a good print resource available. . . . (P102L26-27) I'd get a hold of any kind of print resource that I could and read up on accepted policies, procedures and guidelines for dealing with this, because there's some things that we did that, quite frankly, I'd have thought we should never have done. But my counsellor had been through it before and she said "Yes. Do this." The book said "Do this." Like this general assembly in the gym for all the kids, grades 3 to 12 - 300 kids in the gym, and I'm supposed to go in there and tell them what's happened! I didn't know if that was an appropriate thing to do. But when it was all said and done, and we did it, it was great. (Allan: P101L37-P102L1)

The principals were in agreement on the value of a CI manual. They found it a helpful guide as, in times of stress, it was easy to forget important details and a well-written policy becomes a handy reference guide and checklist. Having the manual also gave a sense of confidence that one is on the right path. The manual, of course, could not account for every contingency, but it gave the general outlines and the principal could adapt for unusual circumstances.

Be yourself

> Susan was adamant on the importance of being yourself.
>
> Be who you truly are, and if you don't have those skills it's time you developed them cause it'll kill you if you don't. . . . (P176L32-33) and you do drive people crazy when you're who you are, but they know who you are; they know what to expect. And that's, I think, in times of crisis people need to know that. (P176L44-P177L2)

Without exception, the principals, each in various ways, had strong personalities. They indicated the importance of being who you are - to be yourself. The principals had many forces competing for their attention especially during a CI. To maintain one's sanity and clarity of purpose not having to worry about manipulating your personality to some desired end with different people frees up your energy to deal with the crisis at hand. This does not mean that the principals were not concerned how the appeared to their public, they were (appearing competent was a major personal concern) but there was an acceptance of their own personalities that was truly remarkable. It was as if they had been forged in the fires of battle (the CI) and, even though scarred, were deeper and fuller human beings because of the experience. This strength of character and acceptance of self was a pleasant surprise for me (this may have to due with my work as a psychotherapist where my clients do not have strong ego strength and do not accept

themselves as they are).

Show feelings

A number of principals talked about the importance of being seen as having feelings:

> You can have this facade in front all the time of control but you need to open that up. Because then people get to see you as a human being. I hope that's what we do here. We're strong. We need to be. But if we need to sit down they allow for that and I think that's what being a principal is all about . . . . (P144L6-10) I think it's more important that people see you as who you are and not who you pretend to be all dressed up. (Susan: P144L13-15)

> And the biggest mistake I think we made – we make . . . I know this sounds odd – is not showing that it does bother us. (Susan: P172L23-25)

> I think kids being able to see us and our reaction and not holding our feelings back and sort of showing that it was okay to grieve openly (Tony, P389L18-20)

Showing feelings indicated the humanity of the principal and the organization that the principal represents. In larger schools this was critical as the principal can get removed from the students more so than in a small school where the principal is often teaching. Henry also talked about appearing less affected by a CI due to competence. His team had become efficient at handling a CI and this could be interpreted as detached. Tony, as seen in the quote above, believed that showing feelings is beneficial for the whole school. As the principal, he led the way and expressed emotion with students and staff. He strongly believed that this had a major impact on the healing within the school.

Show concern

As Susan said it is important to show concern:

> You can never be wrong; you can never do wrong by showing concern for people, or reaching out to people. That is never wrong to do . . . . (P172L5-7)

Furthermore, when showing concern it must be sincere and not just meaningless platitudes. Susan spoke strongly to this point when she said:

> Don't give the trite an[swer] . . ."I feel your pain!" . . . DON"T do that! "God works in mysterious ways." That just smacks people right in the – I mean I would slap someone if they said that to me if my Mom died or my kid died. (P175L20-23)

Showing concern was similar to showing feelings in that it sent a message to the school community that the welfare of the students and staff were important to the principal. This created a sense of security and trust and helped develop a caring attitude within the school.

Ask for help

Asking for help is similar to the ability to delegate, in other words, not being afraid to let go of the need to control all aspects of the CI management.

> Never, ever be afraid to ask for help. The worst thing you can do is not talk about it, ignore it. Accept help. I mean, principals, good principals know that if they don't know the answer to something, we're past the stage of being embarrassed to ask, ask someone. Because we all remember what it was like. And besides, people were so good when you ask them for help! I mean it does, you know, you reinforce the bond. I guess don't be afraid to ask for help. And try, if you can, to look for those that can, that have been there, that have experienced it. . . . (P171L5-14) Why reinvent the wheel? (Susan: P172L22)

> Bring in the counsellors, whether the kids . . . whether the parents think they need them or not, bring them. At least, you've tried. You've made access [possible]. (Bob: P344L30-32)

Some principals had a collaborative style and asking for help was not difficult. Others learned to ask for help through the process of managing a critical incident. One principal has great difficulty asking for support and took on the whole burden of managing a CI.

Admit mistakes and take responsibility

Susan mentioned the importance of admitting mistakes, "we screwed up – we

were the first ones to admit it!" (P173L13) In admitting mistakes a message is sent that the principal is not trying to shirk responsibility, is human and willing to improve.

Staff meetings and debriefing

Staff meetings and debriefing at the start of the day were considered an important function. In previous sections, staff meetings and debriefing were an aspect of communication and support. Bob talked about this:

> Cause staff needed time to talk before, before they could deal with things. That's a top recommendation I would always say . . . in our case we took a whole morning, cause it was pretty major. But, you know, it might be only an hour just for information. But most of it was just dealing [with] more personal things. You had the chance to speak, if you so wished. And maybe, you know, get some emotional things that you need to face. Because a lot of the staff later in the week were asked to perform certain functions at the funerals. (P337L16-22)

This sharing was seen as not just for the staff but also for the principals. Bob talked about the need to "share the burden. . . . share the responsibilities." (P364L14-16) Allan felt it was useful to "talk to some other people who have been through it." (P102L27-28) Furthermore, Alex said that:

> You should never say no to any counselling. And I think most people now-a-days the way the world is, have to talk to somebody sometime, no matter who it is. If it's going to be a good friend, or a wife, or a professional. But uh, there's going to be things that are going to happen to you. Being a principal is a tough job now-a-days. It really is. So, be prepared to talk to somebody. There's the STF people. Don't try and do it all by yourself. Just the day-to-day things, the nasty things that can happen day-to-day. You know, compounded on a tragic event will be enough to make you probably, at sometime or other, you'll have to talk to somebody. You take care of your own emotional health, too. (P264L22-31)

The process of meeting as a group in staff meetings or debriefing allowed staff to air concerns, share feelings, get support, and feel part of the process of CI management as responsibilities are delegated. An extension of this process, that Alex discussed, was

personal counselling. The principal who was busy creating a supportive environment for staff must also debrief and the counselling process is one option.

Be prepared

Being prepared was one of the more difficult tasks that the principals mentioned. Generally, principals do not like to think the unthinkable and there seemed to be an aversion to CI pre-incident training or practice. Alex talked about the importance of re-visiting one's plan:

> Well to have a tragic events response team ready. And revisit it every, probably every year. Just revisit it. Say, well, is this person still around, let's put this person in charge, do we want to maybe change anything. You know it's easy to put it in place - not easy, but I mean most people will. But if you don't have anything happen, all of a sudden three or four years go by and then something happens. "Oh jeepers! Well these people aren't even around anymore!" Or "This organization doesn't even exist anymore!" And, to put it into place and revisit it at least once a year. (P264L6-13)

In the same vein Paul talked about having the team in place and good staff relations:

> Having the team - the resource team of, of counselling team and, and teacher team . . . it may sit dormant but [it] needs to be in place in every school. . . . (P17L26-28) If you have good relationships with your staff . . . it helps (P17L23-24)

The main advice around the issue of preparedness was to review and update policy, procedures and personnel to make sure the team is current and everyone is up to date, and furthermore, having good relations with the staff assists in this process.

Media

Most of the critical incidents discussed in the interviews did not involve the media. However, a couple of major incidents did involve the media and a principal cannot predict when the media may suddenly show up on the school property. Bob's advice was to have:

> I never talked to the media ever. Ever. The Director of Education at that time dealt with the media and all the questions were channeled through one person who wasn't so close to the whole situation. . . . (P319L28-30) and have that spokesperson NOT from the community if possible. It sure made a difference here. It lightened the load cause you didn't have to deal with the media. (P344L25-27)

Paul's school also had "someone as a media contact person" (P7L40-P8L1) and found that it was important to be specific when dealing with the contact person.

Recognizing deceased appropriately

Recognition of the deceased caused many principals sleepless nights. There were the questions of how, what and when to deal with. Bob felt it was important that:

> Within the first couple months you have to recognize the deceased by having something in your school – pictures, framed or otherwise, very, very important. Most schools do this but there's a few I noticed that don't. And I think it's very, very important to do that – recognize those kids right away, get their picture up on the wall. Whatever you want, birth date, death date, a little quote. We've got that in our hallway, I don't know if you noticed. But its, very, very important for some of the kids to hang on to, for the visitors, the staff and you shouldn't let that go too long. Like we did ours all within the first month pretty well, a month, six weeks . . . It made a big difference. (P364L27-36)

How to recognize the deceased was mentioned by a number of principals as being a difficult issue and there seemed to be little reference even in their manuals on how to best approach this subject. The difficulty lies in not wanting to go overboard and giving undue attention ongoingly. This was more of a problem in suicides but came in accidental deaths as well. The principals sometimes had to deal with parents who were saying "enough is enough, lets get on with school."

Project stability

The final piece of advice came from Henry when he talked about the "key" to the process. It was to "look after the kids and you look after the staff. . . . (P195L32) you're

establishing a sense of calm and a sense of continuity in the proceedings . . . creating that security in the environment helps." (P195L36-P196L2)

Susan discussed how it was important for her to create a feeling of family within the school, which she also saw as a reflection of the district's approach and philosophy. Susan fostered this community spirit within the school "because that's what pulls you through" (P168L17) in crisis situations. This spirit or feeling coalesced around the concept of family.

> We used to call it the (name of school) family. It was like family support . . . we wanted that sense. We've worked very hard for that. And it's still there. . . . (P137L31-P138L2) I wanna say we are, in a sense, a true family . . . in the sense that we fight, we argued, we pout, "mom likes you better." But that's what . . . we're trying to foster here. That sense I can count on you if it really got down to it. (P138L14-16)

When encountering a CI the principals were highly aware of the need to re-establish equilibrium in the school as fast as possible. This could be supported by the principal's personal projection of calm and being in control and by the creation of a supportive atmosphere as Susan explained by establishing a feeling of family and family care in her school.

Training

Most of the learning that principals experienced was on the job. Some learned from reading and no one learned about CI management from the their teacher or graduate training.

Bob: No. I had no training. (P345L3)

Tony: No. Not really. (P380L8)

Henry: It (managing a CI) was without any formal training. (P179L10-11)

Mark: No. No formal training in undergraduate or graduate school of any

> kind. (P230L19)
>
> Susan: I went through EdAdmin in the master's program, Absolutely nothing (P141L14-15)
>
> Allan: No. And I guess, when you take masters, your masters training of course, it's, you've got your compulsory classes and then you've got areas that you're interested in, I don't even know if there is anything available in that. (P98L16-19)

Death and the management of CIs were not taught either at the undergraduate or the graduate level. Some had received training after they became principals and it was after experiencing a CI. Allan talked about the need for some training:

> You're dealing with all these kid's academic needs, now you're dealing with all their emotional needs, and you're the only person there?! So um, even, even more so in small schools where there's, where, you know, there's not very many staff or much in terms of resources - people, human resources to draw on - I think it would be really helpful to have some kind of training in this, definitely. (P99L10-14)

Maria felt it was important as well:

> Not when I did my initial teacher training. And that's what I was hinting at of when you're training teachers to be teachers - there should be some component in there. We probably have an ed-psych class or something which would have given the basics but not anything that really touched on or dealt with how you're gonna have to actually deal with situations, possible scenarios, you know, things like that would have been beneficial. And that's why I think that now that they've gone through that for such a long period of time without incorporating something like that - that's where I really feel the school in services, or a division in services. However you need to be able to offer your staff something in ways of knowing how to do this. (P71L34-P72L7)

Sherri feels that there should be training not only about CISM but also practical first aid like CPR:

> Yeah I think that there should be something - I don't know - I don't know what a whole course of it would be. It would be a lot but in some form there should be some sort of training. Everybody should do CPR - I do think that cause I don't think you'd want to find yourself in a situation without it. And I think within that you could probably do some stuff on - and you do touch on that in that kind of

sense some Critical Incidents - within CPR - some things anyways. (P310L7-12)

The advice from the principals was that some sort of CI training should occur during their academic years. They felt it did not have to be a full term but should be substantive and that principals who had experienced a CI come in to give the benefit of their experience.

Summary of Principals' Advice

During the interviews, when I asked for the principals' advice, there was a perceptible reluctance to answer the question. I think it was more than simple humility. When answering, there was a caution or trepidation in the answers as if there was a reluctance to generalize their experience to others. One principal cautioned that each CI is unique and that what worked in one situation may not in another. That being said, here are their suggestions which can be separated into two areas as seen in Table 5.3: advice about the self and advice about the school. Advice about the self includes showing

Table 5.3 Two Categories of Advice for Principals

About Self	About School
- Show Feelings - Be Yourself - Admit Mistakes and Take Responsibility - Ask for Help - Show Concern - Be Prepared	- Communicate with Staff - Designate Media Person - Have a Manual - Recognize Deceased - Create Support Network - Project Stability

feelings, being yourself, admitting mistakes and taking responsibility, asking for help, showing concern and being prepared. Advice about the school includes, communicating with staff, designating a media person, having a manual, recognizing the deceased, creating a support network, and projecting stability into the school.

The most frequently emphasized areas of advice regarding the school were:

1) having a manual, 2) communicating with staff and 3) creating a support network. Having a manual gave direction and acted as an emotional support. Knowing what to do and how to get there was further supported by having an extensive support network within the school and the community. Needless to say, a well informed staff was better able to support the principal and the students in the recovery process.

The most frequently emphasized areas of advice regarding the self were: 1) showing concern, 2) asking for help, and 3) being prepared. It was important for the principal to show concern by projecting a warmth and humanity thus insuring a connection to the staff and students. Due to the workload and stress of the CI sometimes the principal could appear distanced and distracted and this would be interpreted in a negative light thus making the his or her ultimate goals more difficult. Showing concern through care and compassion were critical to assisting the healing process.

Asking for help seemed to be difficult for people in leadership positions and this is no different for school principals. A commonly held misperception was that asking for help is a sign of weakness when it came from the leader. Naturally, principals who held this belief did not want to appear weak and thus cut themselves off from potential support. Some principals in this study held to the above stated belief but were forced, due to the workload, to ask for support. They were pleasantly surprised and realized that people were willing and capable. Furthermore, by eliciting this support the staff felt included and empowered by the process, which led to a reduction of the burden carried by the principal and the flowering of a team sensibility amongst the staff.

Being prepared was probably the single most effective action principals took to support the effective management of a CI. Being prepared included having, 1) an action

plan (the manual), 2) a personal support team in place, 3) a CISM team, 4) access to CISD for staff and students and 5) access to long term support for staff and students if needed. Unfortunately, no principal had any training to assist in his or her preparation in school or graduate school. Training was through the experience itself. The older principals did not even have manuals to assist them (this need was so evident that Henry was part of a team that created a manual for the district) and even Sherri, the youngest and most recent principal did not have an on-site CI manual. Other than Sherri, all principals had or were about to have a manual.

In summation, the principals offered a number of suggestions for leaders who will manage a CI. This advice focused on the self and the school. The principal was advised to be prepared emotionally and managerially. Personal preparation included an understanding of the CI process including the logistics of the event and the emotional impact the event has on the school and on the self. Showing concern and being prepared to seek assistance are seen as important along with not being afraid to demonstrate emotion. Advice for the principal about the school focused on creating a support network, having a manual and having clear and ongoing communication with staff and students.

CHAPTER SIX

Summary, Discussion and Implications

In this chapter, the research process is summarized, findings are presented including a review of the themes, and the research questions are answered. Then, a discussion ensues on the relationship between the themes and key elements for successful CI management, including the principals' relationship to emotion, caring support and community. This is followed by an examination of the personal responses to critical incidents, crisis management and successful outcomes. The final section of the chapter includes implications for theory, practice, and future research.

Summary of Process

Prior to beginning this research, I was affected by the rash of, and apparent increase in, violent deaths occurring in schools across Canada and the United States (see Johnson, 2000; Kaufman et al., 2000; Stevenson, 2002). According to Kaufman et al., the rate of violent crime is dropping and it is the media exposure that makes it appear that there is an increase. However, the anecdotal sentiment and personal experiences of the principals interviewed would indicate an increase in violence in their schools over the past twenty years. This apparent increase in violence was making headline news on a regular basis and with my interest in leadership and emotion I was drawn towards the principal's experience, especially the emotional component.

The purpose of this research was to understand the emotional experience of principals who had managed a critical incident involving a death(s) and to examine the impact of managing a CI on leadership including communication, interpersonal relationships and decision making. This was accomplished within a qualitative research

paradigm that was guided conceptually by feminist constructivism (Jaggar, 1997) and experiential psychological (Greenberg & Safran, 1989) concepts of knowledge, learning and emotion. The key aspect of this orientation is that emotion is valued in and of itself and is seen as a source of knowledge. Emotion enhances connection with self and others, and is intrinsic to the healing process. Within this orientation, a constant comparative analysis and thematic distillation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was applied to the data (interviews). The selection of a qualitative orientation as the most appropriate research methodology for the purposes of this study was supported by DeRivera (1980), Glesne and Peshkin (1992), Merriam (1989), Lythcott and Duschl (1990), and Taylor and Bogdan (1984).

In the literature review, the focus was on emotion as a way of knowing, emotion and leadership, crisis management and critical incident management in schools. There was an emphasis in the literature that when emotions are valued in organizations and groups, an atmosphere of care is enhanced which increases the feeling of a supportive community (Blackmore, 1989; Jaggar, 1997; Mumby & Putnam, 1992). This leads to sensitivity for others in the community which is demonstrated by caring (Noddings, 1984).

Historically there has been a separation between rationality (mind) and emotionality (body), but modern re-conceptualizations of these two elements envision them as bound together in an intricate dance and working together. This concept is elucidated by Carek (1990) Greenberg & Safran (1989), Laird & Bressler (1992) and Lane & Schwartz (1987). The integration of emotion and rationality is conceptualized as emotional intelligence (EQ) in Salovey and Mayer's (1990) work on emotional

intelligence and Goleman's (1998b) extrapolation of their work into the field of leadership. EQ has value as people and leaders with high EQ are more aware of their internal and external environment, better able to regulate their emotions, use emotion to motivate themselves and others, have empathy for others and high social skills.

Review of Themes and Research Questions

The following section covers two areas: 1) a review of the themes and 2) a presentation of answers to the research questions first posited in Chapter One.

Review of Themes

Through a process of constant comparative analysis the themes were distilled from the data. The themes were: emotion (the feelings experienced throughout the critical incident process), concern (worry and concern for the people involved - students, teachers, staff and parents - and tasks to be accomplished), internal support (the principals' actions and beliefs that helped them cope with the CI), external support (support systems that assisted the principal personally and managerially), caring support (that which the principals gave to others), principals' strengths, leadership, learning, and advice.

Emotion. The principals indicated that managing a critical incident is an emotionally difficult experience. The emotions listed by the principals included: feeling shocked, sad, worried, overwhelmed, angry, stressed, tired, relieved (at the end of the process) and having cathartic experiences and physical reactions. Upon first hearing the news, typically, the principal felt shock then sadness, then there was a moment of reorganizing and putting feelings aside and then worry about what needed to be done. The event was stressful, which created feelings of tiredness and at the end of the CI

process - relief. Some principals were aware of their physical responses to the CI but this was the minority. Somewhere in the process many principals had a cathartic release. Emotional releases tended to happen in private with loved ones or at the funeral. Again, a few felt overwhelmed and about half reported feeling anger at some point during the process.

Concern. The principals had a list of concerns that kept them busy throughout the process of managing the CI. The concerns can be divided into two fields – concern about the students and staff (primary) and self (secondary). The principals were concerned about how their decisions would affect the students, staff, and community. A continuous feedback loop of concerns was diagrammed that showed how specific issues, ongoing effects, external relationships and the principal's emotional response affect both the primary and secondary concerns and decisions and well as the decisions affecting concerns. Specific issues were school closure, assemblies, wakes, funerals, suicide memorials, graduation and replacing a teacher. External relationship involved the board, directors, community and TERT. Ongoing effects were rumours and the students' response to a suicide. Concerns that aroused the most emotional response were dealing with parents, public presentations, and personal reactions.

Internal support. The internal support or coping mechanisms the principals used were: moving into action or doing mode (most common), compartmentalizing, tapping into life experience regarding death, using faith, prayer or meditation, exercise, music, self-contentment or oneness with the bigger picture, and journaling. Internal support consists of activities done by oneself (music, exercise, journaling, prayer, meditation, doing/action) activities with others (doing/action, exercise) and mental states brought on

by experience or overall sense of well-being (self-contentment).

External support. External support refers to all elements that the principals used to help themselves manage the CI both logistically and emotionally. This support came from the school system, family and friends, and the community. School support included the vice-principal, head office, support teams, counsellor, staff, students and the manual. Personal support came from the spouse, parents, children, siblings, in-laws and friends. Community support came from parents of students, nurses, case workers, mental health organizations, hospital, clergy, First Nations elders, fire department, and police department. A special note is made about the relationship between the principal and the counsellor. This was often a critical relationship which the principals often referred to as a special "team."

Caring Support. The metaphor of family was used by principals to talk about their school and how the principal related to the students and staff. Offering *caring support* was a critical function that the principal engaged in on a daily basis and especially so during a critical incident. This caring support was seen when the principals walked the halls talking to staff and students, talked one on one in the staff room with teachers, joined students in the gym to shoot baskets and find out how he or she was doing, and talking with the parents who had lost a child. For example, empathic listening is a critical skill that led to taking valuable suggestions from both students and staff and led to increased feelings of connection and empowerment for all concerned.

Principals' strengths. Principals' strengths refer to the qualities and personality traits that assisted the principals in coping, managing and providing leadership during the CI. These strengths were similar to those presented in Salovey and Mayer's (1990)

typology of emotional intelligence. The principals' strengths included: self-confidence, coping ability, faith, willingness to lead, resource recognition and utilization, organizational ability and communication skills, awareness of role and expectations, ability to listen and ownership of the school.

Leadership. The constituent elements that made up the theme of leadership were caring, relationship, action, communication, empowerment, management skills, and responsibility. Caring was the overarching aspect of leadership that infused all the other elements. The principals talked about how relationships were easier, more effective and deeper when coming from a caring attitude; action that was infused with caring was better received from students and staff; and communication was seen as more effective when caring was an essential element of the process. Furthermore, caring for others led to students and teachers feeling empowered and made the implementation of management decisions more humane. Finally, it seemed that it was the principals caring about the school community that made them acutely aware of their responsibilities.

Learning. Principals in this study learned much about themselves, others and the process of managing a CI. Their learning can be divided into three areas of crisis management: pre-crisis, crisis and post crisis. Furthermore, experience and perspective interacted with the process of crisis management and subsequent learning. Learning included: the need to prepare more for a crisis, to continually observe students and teachers, take advice, talk to people for support, delegate, use First Nations concepts about healing, have respect for people's unique responses to the tragedy, and realizing that there is no control on certain events. Looking back on the crisis the principals learned that they could indeed manage and survive the process and some discovered that

it was "okay" to show emotion.

Advice. The principals' advice fell into two categories - advice about self and about the school. Advice about the self included: show your feelings, be yourself, admit mistakes and take responsibility for them, ask for help, show concern and be prepared for a CI. Advice concerning the school included: communicate with staff, designate a media person, have a CI manual, recognize the deceased, create a support network, and project an aura of stability. The most frequently mentioned advice was to have a manual and create a support network. These two items were identified a being essential to effective CI management.

Responses to Research Questions

The research question about emotional experiences and outcomes of the principal managing a CI divided into eight sub-questions and are as follows with the attendant answers:

1) *How do leaders/principals manage their emotions during a critical incident?* Typically, especially at the beginning of the crisis, principals managed their emotions by compartmentalizing. Some principals never let go or demonstrate outwardly their feelings despite strong affect. Others found times when they considered it safe or appropriate to display emotions including at staff meetings, funerals, and in private with the counsellor or with a loved one. These releases were considered in a positive light even if the principal felt a need to justify it to the interviewer. The principals that felt overwhelmed by their emotions relied on their spouses or significant other for support. Parents and siblings were also mentioned as offering considerable support.

2) *How do leaders/principals manage the feelings of others (students, teachers*

and parents)? Managing the feelings of others during a critical incident is a rather daunting task. The principals managed this by being available to hear the complaints, worries and sorrows of students, staff and parents. Principals talked about having open door policies and encouraging both students and staff to see them at any time. As Mark said, you are a "counsellor." The principals were acutely aware of the emotional status of the school and one principal talked about walking around the halls checking in with whomever he bumped into and asking how they were doing. It was important to be seen during a time of crisis. The leader was making his or her presence felt. The leader was visible and showing concern.

The principals used a number of options to manage the teachers' emotions including: staff meetings, talking individually to teachers who were having a difficult time, making sure they were aware of support services, rumour squelching, giving information and practical advice both individually and in group, and making classroom relief available if the teacher needed time off.

Regarding students, some principals went to individual classrooms and talked about the deceased. Almost all principals talked at the assembly. An openness to student participation and idea creation was supported which empowered the students to feel less helpless, cope with the death, and honor the deceased.

I do not believe the principals would say they managed, or even attempted to manage the parents' emotions, but the principal offered support by visiting, offered the school for gatherings, attended wakes, said something at the funeral (even delivering the eulogy), and assisted in setting up scholarships and other memorials. The principals also asked how and what the school could do for the parents and within reason were

accommodating.

3) *What are the long-term effects of managing a critical incident on the principal?* Long-term effects of managing a CI on the principal included, on the positive side: gaining an understanding of the process of CI management, becoming "wiser," "more understanding," and having a greater appreciation for and by the community. On the negative side: avoidance of CI training and practice, difficulties with integrating the death in a healthy manner, vicarious traumatization and burnout after having managed many CIs over extended periods of time and not receiving adequate debriefing or critical incident stress management.

4) *How does a critical incident affect interpersonal communication?* In short, it enhanced communication between almost all the groups the principals interacted with including: teachers, students, parents, board, and the community at large. The only group where communication was diminished for some principals was with district superintendents and directors. The most dramatic increase in communication was between principal and counsellor. This led to the creation of a team spirit between the two where ideas could be freely discussed and feeling shared, thus strengthening the bond between the two. High levels of communication between the principals and all the stakeholders were not only seen as a choice, but a necessity for effective CI management.

5) *How does a critical incident affect relationships between the principal and the school community?* It brought the community closer together. A new appreciation and understanding for the values and abilities of community members, and they for the school, was fostered. The community and the school became integrated at a new and enhanced level. As Allan said, ". . . this was just another one of those things that, I think,

that took us further down the road in terms of making the school even more part of the community than what it has been in the last five years." (P110L33-35) For the principals that were involved with creating a CI protocol that included community resources, this led to a strong network of working relationships with community services including police, fire, mental health services and the hospital.

6) *How does managing a critical incident affect decision-making?* A CI is an experience beyond the norm and produces considerable anxiety and upset. In order to manage these feelings the principals geared up and focused on the multitude of tasks to be accomplished. Furthermore, the principals were highly concerned about making the right choices and decisions and how these choices would be seen by the community. Most principals started intense data gathering using experienced staff, vice-principals, counsellors, and directors. Some principals even had group decision-making with the staff.

In general conversation and through the interviews, my sense was that there was a wide range of decision-making and leadership styles among the principals. The most notable shifts in style occurred in principals who would typically be the sole decision-maker and then shifted to a more collaborative and distributive model during the CI. The principal still maintained ultimate authority but appreciated and took advantage of the talent and support that was available.

It was unclear if the principals saw themselves as self-reflective prior to the CI but they certainly did during and afterwards. The CI made it abundantly clear the heavy responsibility that weighed on the principals, which led to a constant examination of the choices made. First time experience with a CI was like being thrown into the deep end of

the pool without having had swimming lessons. It was sink or swim and this was a daunting experience. Furthermore, not knowing what the right choices were was an uncomfortable position to be in. Having a manual was often mentioned as the saving grace, giving direction and confirming choices made.

7) *What are the effects of managing a critical incident on physical and emotional well-being?* Generally speaking, only a few effects were identified by the principals. On the physical side, headaches and stomach reactions were mentioned. All principals talked about being physically and emotionally tired through the process and immediately afterwards.

On the emotional side, three principals were still angry, many years after the fact, over the way they were treated by district office staff. During the first interview two other principals broke down in tears. Therefore, at least half the principals interviewed had unresolved issues over CIs that had occurred approximately three to six years previously. Without more in depth analysis it is difficult to assess the effects other than to say that even with a general reluctance to discuss the issue of negative effects of managing a CI, half the population (who, it must be remembered, successfully managed the CI – no participants in the study identified as failing to manage their CI) were negatively impacted to varying degrees and had outstanding issues.

8) *How do principal's emotions during a critical incident affect leadership?* If the emotions are overwhelming it makes leadership difficult. This seems rather obvious and the typical decision by principals was to put their emotions aside until after key leadership functions had been executed. Principals that were having a difficult time managing their emotions relied on the support of key individuals and did their best. A

more accurate assessment would need on site observations or feedback from people on the receiving end of the decision-making process.

Principals who had difficulty with their reactions were in survival mode and were not able to give detailed recollections of the process regarding leadership issues. That being said, other principals who had powerful emotional responses, but were not negatively affected, used their emotional responses to acknowledge their humanity and connection to people. These principals identified their emotions as natural, appropriate, and healthy, which led to an enhanced leadership capacity

Reflections on Findings

In summary, the answers to my questions point to the importance of communication as a critical skill in managing the experience of a critical incident and a connecting element that is woven through the answers to the eight questions. Upon examining this thread of communication, the principal must be able to first communicate with him or herself. This communication is discussed by the principals as a talking to oneself or a self-reflective process whereby the principal looks for perspective on the unfolding event.

Self-communication is an assessment that occurs as to how long a moment can be taken in experiencing emotional responses to the tragic news before re-focusing on the tasks that need to be accomplished. It is the pep talk the principals gave to themselves when phoning the parent of the deceased child or delivering the eulogy. It is what occurs at those few moments when the principals had time alone to engage in meditation or reflection on the experience. This ability to listen to one's inner voice and the messages received is an important higher order skill that every leader needs to take the time to tap

into for effective focusing, strategizing, and self-assessment.

Second, the ability to listen was a key component in how principals' managed the emotion of others. Principals talked about the importance of being available to talk, being seen, demonstrating concern, and having personal contact with students and staff. All of these concrete examples are forms of communication. The principal is communicating care through observable actions. When this kind of care is exhibited, principals stated that an improvement in the relationships between staff, students and the community was a natural consequence.

Third, this increased connectedness with the stakeholders in the critical incident process enhanced and sometimes led to changes in decision-making style. As more open styles of communication were engaged in, principals typically practiced more consultative decision making. This process of decision making might involve a group or one other person (typically the counsellor).

Finally, the effects of managing a CI, both long and short term, can be as varied as the individual. The principals experienced stress, felt tired by the process, and may have had minor physical symptoms. Positive outcomes included a deeper appreciation of the meaning of life and death, improved self-confidence, self-knowledge and awareness that, "I can manage a critical incident." On the negative side, if principals did not get support to manage personal issues that surfaced during the CI, this could lead to excessive stress, burnout over time, vicarious traumatization, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and negative unresolved feelings towards superiors. It would appear that these negative outcomes were a direct result of the lack of effective communication with superiors and avoidance of communication with the helping profession regarding

personal issues.

Discussion

Paraphrasing Goethe, *we are shaped and fashioned by that which we love*. In this dissertation I have cautiously alluded to the importance of love in the responsible caring demonstrated by the principals when managing a CI. The principals themselves never talked directly about love but come close when they discussed the school as "family" and the losses suffered as similar to losing a family member. This sentiment is echoed in Pitcher and Poland (1992) who stated that this is typical in "excellent schools" where there is "personal attachment and involvement" (p. 74). In the larger schools this phenomenon was less well articulated but again hinted at by the principals who were directly involved through coaching or counselling of an individual who eventually died. Concepts of love are supported in the Catholic schools as being part of the Christian ethic of compassion and caring to be modeled by the principal for the staff and students. Referring back to Goethe's quote, I believe that the principals in this study were indeed shaped and fashioned by their love for the school and its inhabitants. Because of this love, strong feelings, both positive and negative, are elicited when managing a CI involving a death.

In the following sections I will discuss: the principals' responses to critical incidents, the relationship between the themes, and examine crisis management and successful outcomes.

Personal Responses to Critical Incidents

One of my original concerns, that principals did not consider their well-being during a CI, was supported by the data. However, the idea that this was not in the

principal's best interest has been modified. In order to manage the critical incident process effectively, most of the principals put personal considerations aside upon hearing of the death(s). Therefore, it was not problematic in the main that the principals compartmentalized their emotional responses while managing a CI. It did, however, become problematic if they did not address the issues and their feelings once the crisis was over. Therefore, the original assumption was correct in that principals deliberately disregarded their needs during the crisis (for practical purposes) and typically did not come back and examine what was put aside once the crisis was over. The original assumption needs to be further refined as some principals found their initial emotional response problematic and were not able to compartmentalize effectively. Putting their feelings aside was not possible nor did they seek help at that time or afterwards. In fact, none of the principals said that they had sought out professional help during or after the critical incident.

Original presuppositions that the principals did not see the need for help, were too busy, and needed to appear strong and in control were borne out. With the principals in this study, there appears to be a collective blind spot regarding their own needs and or a powerful countervailing force that does not allow them to take action or even contemplate getting help if needed. For example, one principal who suffered for many "years" after the incident stated that, in hindsight, only time could have helped. Seeking professional support did not seem to be a possibility even though, when talking to me, he said that these interviews were like therapy and the final step in his healing (he was not the only one to say this). The countervailing force I am referring to is the third assumption – not to appear weak. By definition, the principal is the leader of the school

and part of his or her function is to be strong during a crisis and to be strong when others are not. But what happens when surprising and uncontrollable feelings emerge? It appears that the principals who had difficulty with their emotional reactions soldiered on at the cost of their well-being. Admittedly, it would have been difficult to pass off some critical function that the principal might normally conduct to a staff member (though one principal did indeed do this) or get outside support. Typically, this was not done during or after the crisis. It would seem that appearing strong must be maintained at all costs. For some principals, this meant masking or withholding emotional displays, for others, showing emotions was not problematic or viewed as weak. Rather, it was described as normal and in Tony's case, cathartic and enhancing of his leadership. However, showing emotion was not a prerequisite for efficient management of a CI and taking care of self. If there were adequate support systems and outlets for stress reduction the principals were able to manage quite well.

An original belief that principals would be too busy to consider their needs appears true for the most part. The CI is an extremely busy time and principals are run off their feet dealing with both logistical issues and emotional outfall. Even with these pressures, some principals managed to find time to journal, go for a walk or run, and talk to friends about the process. So it is possible, though not the norm with this group.

Looking deeper. The literature review on personal responses to CI covers many areas including stress, vicarious traumatization and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I have already used a simplified definition of a Critical Incident as, some event resulting in human suffering beyond the normal range (Mitchell & Everly, 2001). Human suffering combined with the responsibility that principals hold results in stress. Some principals

would define their stress as *eustress* and see the experience as a major challenge while others were definitely *distressed* by the experience. Looking back over the transcripts certain factors can be identified as increasing the possibility of an experience becoming stressful to the point of creating management and or personal difficulties.

1) Recent death(s) in the principals' family was often mentioned as a factor that made managing the CI stressful.

2) If the CI was the first as a principal it contributed to the stress level.

3) The ongoing experience of multiple deaths over an extended time period.

This last factor was evident with one principal who dealt with many tragic and violent deaths in the school and the community. Indeed, this principal could very well have been suffering from *vicarious traumatization* (see page 53 for definition)

Fortunately, as Jenkins (1996), Lane (1993-4), Nixon, Schorr, Boudreux, and Vincent (1999), Joseph, Williams, and Yule (1992), and Viney (1996) suggested, adequate social support is critical in mitigating the effects of stress during a CI and the majority of principals in this study had that support. Some could most definitely have used more support and they were astute enough to realize that they did need support and formed alliances with at least one critical person (this was usually the counsellor). For those principals that did have a wide base of support, they were appreciative and mentioned that support often. Whether it was the clergy, health services or parents the principals constantly mentioned the value of community support.

Negative responses can be extreme and one principal may have even hit criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He had a strong emotional response and feelings of helplessness, persistently re-experienced thoughts about the incident, avoided certain

experiences that reminded them of the incident, and other symptoms which suggest at least some form of pathologic post-traumatic stress and possibly PTSD. Yet, with all the difficulty he had in managing their own response and feeling "overwhelmed" and not knowing how to take care of his school, the principal was able to carry out his functions by focusing on the needs of the school despite his own turmoil. Fortunately, he had support both at home and within the community. What was unfortunate is that this principal was not identified as needing extra help and had to suffer for many years. Indeed he, and at least two other principals, stated that the research process was a final step in their healing process.

A number of principals experienced the responses typical to people going through a CI identified by Brandt, Fullerton, Saltzberger, and Ursana (1995). These characteristic responses include identification, sense of helplessness and inadequacy. Mark had experienced the death of both young women and men in his schools and he has children of both sexes. When a death occurred, he imagined what it must be like for the parents.

> Trying to say what would this be like if this was my own son. You know, how difficult it is it for the family? What if it was my son Alex? And it puts it into perspective. (P220L2-4)

At other times his identification and emotional response is automatic. "You know, she reminded me of my own daughters. . . . (P222L26) It kind of overcomes you." (P222L33) These responses were typical of all the principals whether or not they had children. For the principal without children the students had, in a sense, become surrogate children and his response was equivalent to the principals who had children.

Alex best exemplified the experience of feeling helpless and inadequate during a CI and many of the principals experienced these feelings.

> The suicide was a very traumatic one, and the emotions there that you go through, it's - you feel helpless. You feel some guilt - could you have stopped it. You feel angry, you feel despair. . . . (P246L21-23) You feel inadequate just about - you feel overwhelmed. (P251L3)

Mark summed up this experience with a philosophical explanation when he said, "there's really nothing you can do about it. We are powerless in the face of death is really what it comes down to. I think it's a time when you just realize this is where it ends. You don't solve this." (P237L17-19)

Indeed, one does not "solve" a death. However, effective management of the critical incidents by the principals in this study replicated many of the traits described by Walker (1990) and the attributes proposed by Richardson (1993). Walker identified: a commitment to important values, a sense of personal control, awareness of personal limitations, perception of crisis as challenge and, courage and caution as the traits that help ameliorate the negative effects of managing a CI.

It appeared that the more these traits were embodied by the principals the more effective they were. Examining these traits individually I noticed that all the principals exhibited a commitment to important values. There was a large range in the experience of personal control both across principals and within depending on when the incident occurred in relationship to current context and historically (i.e., first CI). Most principals had a good sense of their limitations. Only one stood out as either not being aware or not willing to admit to personal limitations. Needless to say this principal tended to take on many tasks and not delegate as much as the other principals.

The critical incident is a tragedy and more often than not a shocking event. It is an extremely challenging time from a management and emotional perspective for self and others. Where it becomes problematic is when the crisis as challenge becomes crisis as

personally overwhelming or crisis as victimization as might be more common in the murders that occurred in the schools.

Some of the principals experienced difficulty in managing their emotional experience but most were able to manage their response and their emotions were not problematic. The principals indicated that having experienced a CI was one of the most challenging aspects of their careers whether or not they managed their emotions as well as they would have liked.

Finally, regarding the issue of courage and caution, principals represented the status quo and reflected society's idea of how children should be educated. The principals in this study appeared to me to be pillars of the establishment and their awareness of the effect of and perception of their decisions was highly attuned to the community. Decisions affecting the community were taken after careful deliberation and usually consultation. Courage was displayed from the smallest action to the largest and most obvious. Whether the principal had to conduct CPR for twenty minutes on a dying student while controlling their own gag reflex or walking the halls and quietly asking how staff and students were doing, all the principals impressed me with their courage. True courage is a rare sight and I saw it in each principal that I interviewed. Possibly the greatest demonstration of courage occurred when principals who were having a difficult time managing their emotional responses continued to lead and manage the school despite their inner turmoil. These principals may have faltered but they did not stop and, furthermore, they executed their responsibility while maintaining their humanity.

Richardson (1993) identified six attributes that successful crisis managers use to mitigate negative effects. The first attribute, awareness and proactivity, involves the

assumption that a crisis will occur and that a plan be in place. As was pointed out earlier, almost all the principals either had a plan or were in the process of creating one. However, there is an avoidance of assuming a CI will occur and ongoing practice and updating of the plan is generally weak.

The second attribute includes having up to date knowledge of current theory and practice regarding Critical Incident and disaster relief. Again, except for those principals who have an active interest in the area, dissemination and education in this field was lacking.

The third attribute is left and right brain thinking, which encompasses rational systematic analysis and the emotional creative and imaginative approaches to planning and enactment when a crisis occurs. When engaged in planning, the principals in this study tended to rely exclusively on the rational approach.

The fourth attribute includes empathic communication and group decision–making. The principals demonstrated high degrees of empathy and all but one espoused the values of group decision making models of leadership.

The fifth attribute, being ethically confident, was an attribute that I could say was unequivocally demonstrated in all the principals. The last attribute, emotional strength, is the understanding that crises are not rational events. The principals in this study were quick to realize not only the emotional response of their charges but also their own responses. There was a wide range of emotional response to the CI and, as indicated previously, some principals found it very difficult coping with their reactions. Most, after an initial few minutes of letting in the news, put their emotions to the side, managed the event, and then, during the funeral had a cathartic release. For those principals who were

having a difficult time, they were aware of their response and still managed to negotiate the CI successfully. What they did not manage as well was their own recovery.

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 depicts both the critical incident process and the emotional responses that occurred throughout the critical incident generally and also during specific events. Figure 6.1 represents a simplified and typical critical incident process. The process begins at the pre-crisis stage, moves to the news of the CI, the feelings of shock and emotional response, the taking of a few minutes to compose oneself, then the compartmentalizing of emotions to one side in order to deal with the event, then a focusing on the tasks to be accomplished, executing the to do list or action phase then begins with attendant interactions with all stakeholders, at this point the principal is managing concerns (worries) and offering support, as the crisis moves into its end stages the principal attends remembrances for the deceased, and keeps an eye on the ongoing assessment of the effects of the critical incident on the school. Finally, the experience and any learning are then integrated back into policy.

Figure 6.2, depicts the emotional intensity levels and events over time. Notice that many of the events match those from figure 6.1, but now are related to emotional intensity. The scale of emotional intensity ranges from minus four to plus four. Zero is the baseline representing the average or typical daily emotional intensity level that the principal experienced. Above zero are feelings of anxiety and below zero are depressive feelings. Minus four and plus four are the extremes of those feeling states and would indicate incapacitation or immobility (intensity rating for events are based on the researcher's extrapolation from participants' conversations). This occurred momentarily at the initial discovery of the death and registered as shock then bounced very quickly up

Figure 6.1 **Simplified and Typical Principals' Critical Incident Process**

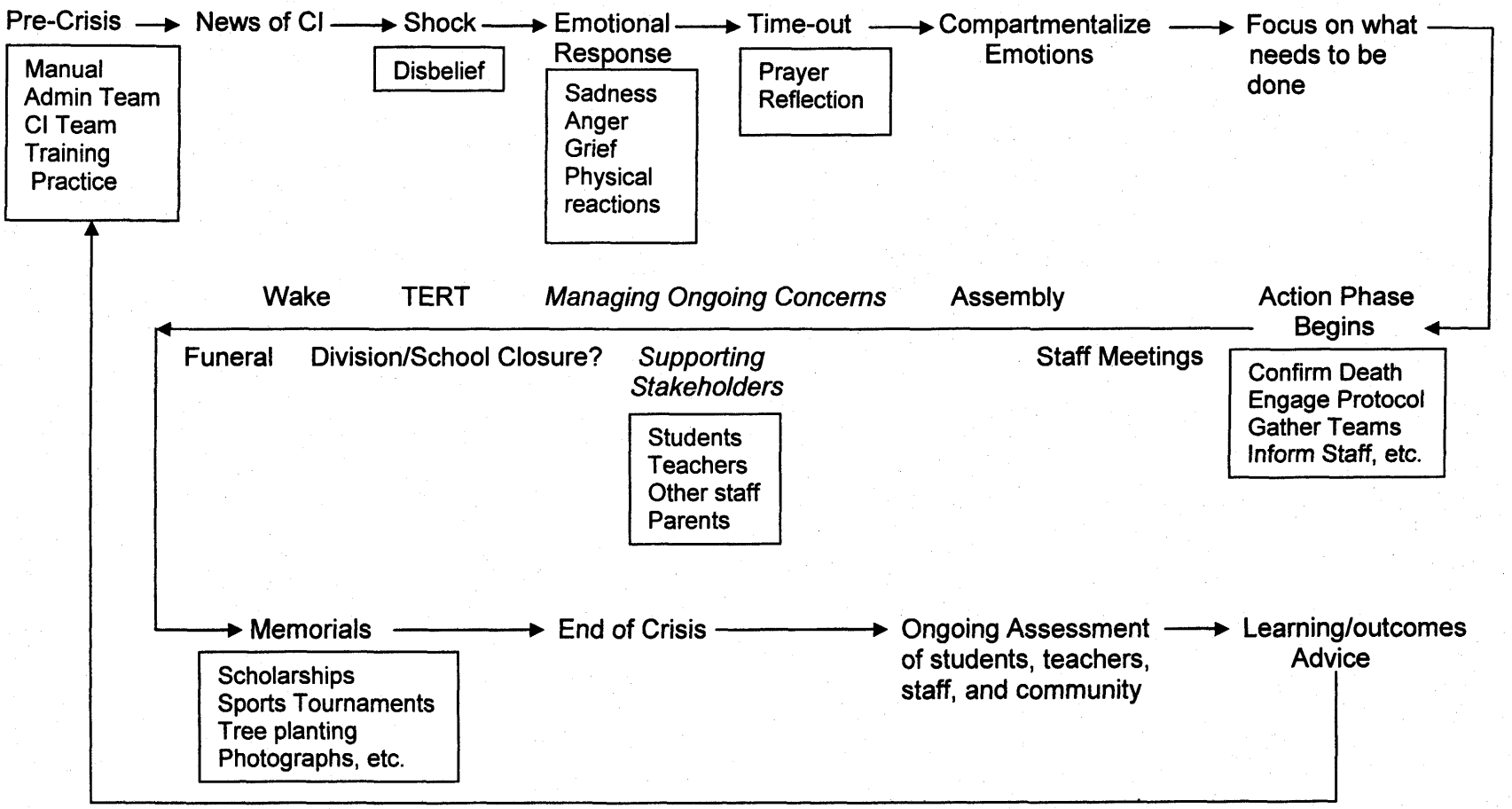
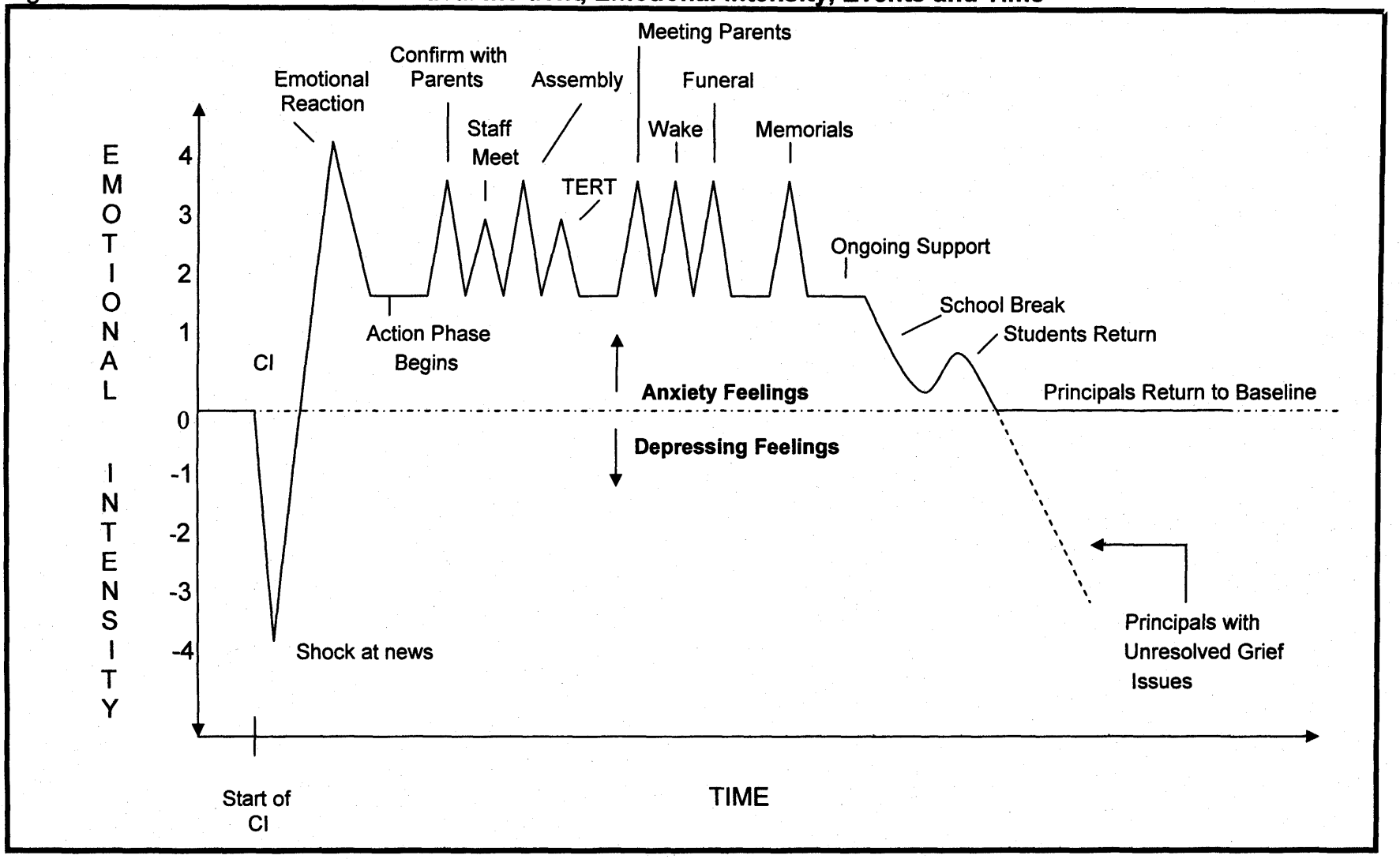


Figure 6.2 **Critical Incident, Emotional Intensity, Events and Time**



to a 3.5 as the emotional response to the news floods in. Typically, the emotional intensity then fluctuated between 2.0 (a medium level of distress or anxiety) and 3.5 which occurred at specific and emotionally challenging events. The 3.5 level is very high stress and challenged the principals but was below the threshold for incapacity [note: some principals avoided certain events believing that they would not be able to cope with the event thus avoiding experiencing a 4.0 level of anxiety]. The emotional intensity fluctuated between the two levels and finally subsided over time, which often included a school break and then returned to baseline. When the students returned after a holiday break or after the funeral, there was a rise in anxiety as concern for the students well-being was felt by the principals. This feeling dissipated as the students moved back into a pre-crisis state of being. Principals that had unresolved issues over the incident could, at this point, move into the depressive zone as represented by the dotted line.

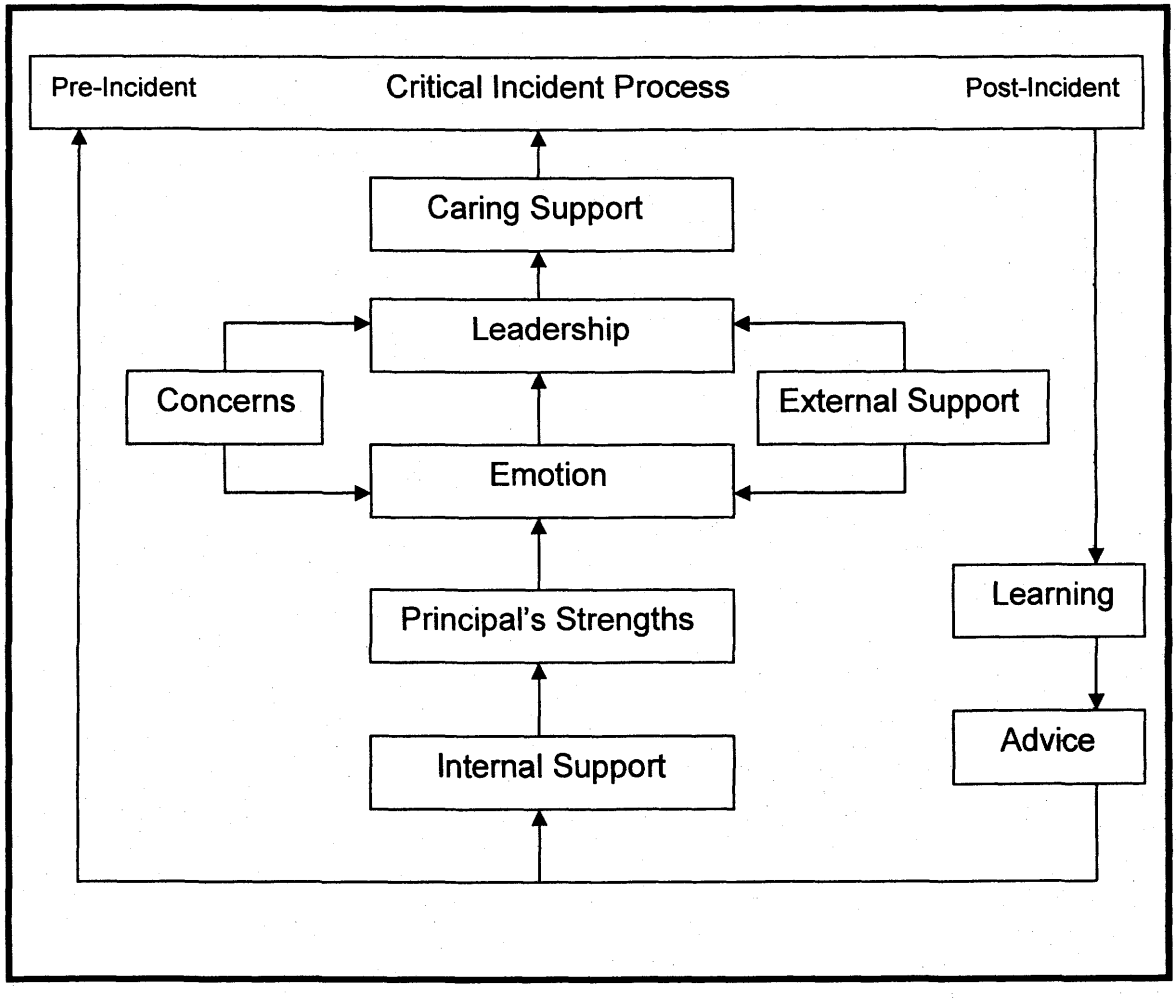
What is not represented is the experience of at least two principals who had strong depressive like symptoms and have a dual process occurring in which they experienced the typical levels of anxiety as well as strong depressive feeling simultaneously. Their initial response set is not indicated in the Figures except as the dotted line after the CI is over, when it descends below the baseline.

Themes and Critical Incident Management

In Figure 6.3, I have arranged the themes in a flow chart in relationship to the CI process. Across the top of the figure is a box representing the CI process from pre-incident to post-incident. At the bottom centre is the theme of internal support. This represents the internal qualities that the principals had that helped them maintain integrity (i.e., keeping it together) while managing the CI. Internal support flowed into and is part

of the principal's strengths which flowed into and affects their emotional responses to the event. The principals' emotions also affected leadership and both these areas are influenced by external support and concerns. The principals' leadership is then manifested as caring support. The principals' caring support then interacts with all aspects of the CI process. Off to the bottom right there is a flow between the post incident and the themes of learning and advice which then circles back into pre-incident planning and preparation to create a continuous loop or closed system. Learning and advice also become part of the principal's new-found information and resource included

Figure 6.3 Relationship of Themes to Critical Incident Process



in the theme of internal support.

The themes, as depicted, help to understand the elements involved in a CI and the process the principals are engaged in. The themes and their relationship, one to the other, can also be seen as a roadmap for managing a critical incident. In particular, the principals' relationship to emotion, caring support, and community encompass major elements described by Salovey and Meyer, (1990) Goldman (1998), and Jaggar (1997) as important to successful management in organizations.

The principals' relationship to emotion was developed, in part, by the meanings created out of the principals' powerful emotional experiences. This process often occurred by taking the time to reflect on the events, one's behavioural response to the events, and the feelings brought up by the events. During a CI this examination typically happened at night after a long and exhausting day. Areas reflected upon included the meaning of life and death, the unfairness of life, and the relationship of self to the world. This was also a time to struggle with unresolved feeling from past deaths.

A number of facets of the relationship between the principal and emotion come clear through the experience of the CI. For example, moral choices were propelled by strong feelings of anger when principals decided to fight over whether or not the school should be closed and whether or not teachers and students should be allowed to attend a funeral. Principals discovered the power of shared emotions in staff meetings, classrooms and assemblies. Principals that allowed emotional release or catharsis with others discovered the value of this experience (feeling better, more connected to the group). Catharsis and cognition through reflection led to learning about self, wisdom, and a changed view of the world. Finally, when encountering overwhelming emotions,

principals discovered that they were able to, with support, carry out their role and responsibilities.

The principal's relationship to rationality and emotionality was complex. On one hand it appeared that principals saw themselves as wise and rational decisions makers. On the other hand, they understood that they were dealing with volatile emotions of students, staff and community members and realized that rationality alone would not suffice when managing a CI. Furthermore, the principals' relationship to emotions and rationality could get in the way of efficient managing when there was dissonance between what they were feeling and their ability to integrate or accept these feelings.

Regardless of the principals' personal experiences during a CI, they agreed that caring and community are essential in the environment of children and this requires more than rational decision-making processes. Mumby and Putnam's (1992) concept of *bounded emotionality* is a best fit with the principals' experiences which encouraged caring, community, interrelatedness, and responsibility.

Caring support refers to the support the principals gave teachers, students, parents and the community. In the school this support was encouraged by:

1) belief in and desire to create a safe and supportive environment

2) having an "open door" policy – easy access to the principal

3) engaging with individuals and groups (e.g., staff meetings)

4) asking people what is needed

5) carrying out the emotionally tough tasks (e.g., talking to parents and students)

6) forward thinking – looking to future needs

7) post-crisis analysis – looking for constant improvement in CI management.

Principals spent a considerable amount of effort on creating a team and a team spirit for the teachers, the school administration and the students. Some principals were even able to move this team approach out into the community regarding CI management. These efforts and concerns the principals demonstrated was reflective of the personal level of responsibility that each one accepted. "The buck stops here" (P282L13-14), was a common sentiment used by the principals to underscore this sense of responsibility. There was a clear and unequivocal ownership and responsibility for the school. Personal responsibility was reflected in one of two orientations to task accomplishment. Either the principals carried out the majority of tasks themselves, or they delegated.

Effective delegation was aided by the principal's connectedness to others, which leads to the third element, community. Principals strived to be connected to the staff, students, parents and community. The most cited form through which this occurred was sports. Many principals had coached at some point in their careers and this activity gave them direct access to the students. One principal even taught a class though it was not part of his job description. Other principals in the smaller schools had regular teaching loads and this led to enhanced connections with the students.

Church was also a useful way to stay connected to parents and the community, as was living in the local area. Connections to teachers occurred by not hiding out in the principal's office, hanging out in the staff room, striking up conversations with teachers, and time itself. Time, as in many years of getting to know teachers, students, parents and community members, led to strong interpersonal connections and valued relationships.

Crisis Management. Effective crisis management involves the minimization of potential risk before an event, the interaction of pre-identified actors once an event occurs

and following the triggering event, "behavioral and emotional responses aimed at recovery and readjustment" (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 66). Examining each of these elements separately it was apparent that the schools and principals represented in this study varied greatly in the degree of crisis preparedness.

Preparedness was often reflected in the CI plan. Was there one, and if there was one, how well was it developed? The full continuum was represented in this study, from no written plan, a two page plan to a full manual. Interestingly, the most developed plans were created by teams in which the principals in this study were part of the creation of the plan. Even though an analysis on the relationship between plan development and effectiveness was not carried out, it appears that the principals with the most comprehensive plans managed the process most effectively. Furthermore, those principals with the most comprehensive plans and most experience in terms of numbers of incidents managed had the best outcomes. This mirrors the literature base that stated having a CI plan is essential to effective management (Gilliam, 1993). Having a plan is not, however, a guarantee for effective use. There was a definite resistance to ongoing practice and updating of the CI plan by the principals in this study. Again, the literature points to the importance of inculcating stakeholders in the procedures and methods of a CI plan (Mitroff & Pearson, 1993). Crisis response needs to be practiced to be most effective.

Some principals had to create a team on the spot. In this case it was typically the principal and his or her counsellor that became the team. Having a prearranged support team would have eased the burden. At least two principals managed the event solo, one by choice and one by necessity. Ziokowski and Willower (1991) stated that most

principals tend to manage crises by themselves even though all the literature suggests a team approach. In this study, at least, the majority of principals had a team approach. Hopefully this is an indication of positive change since Ziokowski and Willower's study in 1991.

When discussing the different stages of a crisis it is in the prodromal stage that much work needs to be accomplished. I have already mentioned the need for a plan and a practiced team to be in place. Another key is education of the stakeholders. Students should be exposed to death education prior to an incident, drinking and driving education, and educating children on accessing mental health services (Pitcher & Poland, 1992). The staff involved with the CI team and community liaisons, if any, should meet at regularly scheduled times. Most of the principals had or were in the process of formulating community disaster planning. There was a strong recognition for the need to involve and integrate the community and community services with the school.

During the acute phase, when the news of the death has hit the school, even though there was "bedlam" (P14L31) and near panic in some situations, somehow the principals managed to work their way through the emotional chaos. Of all the stages, this one, though the most stressful, was probably handled most effectively. Principals who were new to managing a CI said that they were "flying by the seat of your pants" (P202L31) improvising, and counting on support from their counsellor. The more experienced principals knew the drill, what to do, and could focus on looking out for rough spots and individuals who might be susceptible to negative responses.

The chronic stage or clean up stage is a time for the organization to assess its effectiveness and make changes to policy and procedures if needed. Again, like the

prodromal stage, these activities were hit and miss. Some principals never had to make a written report of the incident. Rarely was the principal debriefed and policy changes that occurred were to make up for a lack of a manual. In other words, policy was created because of the CI. This was typical even for those schools that had a policy. Their manual was created after having experienced a CI and only a couple of schools had a manual in place prior to the principal having to deal with a CI. At the time of the interviews eight schools had a manual; one was at the first draft stage and one school was without a manual.

This issue of effective and comprehensive manuals dovetails into the issue of training. None of the principals in this study had any training in critical incident management prior to their first event. This is a gross oversight of not only the district but the education system itself. Why is there no training at the undergraduate and graduate levels?

Despite the lack of training, somehow the principals managed to survive the crisis and hopefully be better prepared for the next one. What follows is an examination of the elements that comprise a successful outcome.

Positive Outcomes. A limitation of this study was the retrospective analysis of the principals' experience, which does not include the viewpoints and opinions of other stakeholders. That being said, some outcomes appeared very positive (i.e., well managed) and other outcomes would fall into what Pearson and Clair (1998) call mid-ground outcomes. Mid-ground outcomes reflect a mix of successes and failures when handling a crisis situation and are the majority experience. No CI in this study was a disaster from the principals' perspective. This does not mean that they do not occur. It

must be remembered that the principals self-selected to be part of the study and it seems probable that those principals experiencing a complete failure would not likely have volunteered to participate. The principals in this study were interested in supporting the research on CI management and some had unfinished business and concerns that they felt might be beneficial for others to know about so as to make a difficult process a little less fraught with perils for those that followed, and to inform administration of what can help and hinder in critical incident management.

Successful outcomes according to Pearson and Clair (1998) resulted from the understanding of and use of signal detection, incident containment, business resumption, effects on learning, effects on reputation, resource availability, and effective decision making (see page 50 for definitions of these factors). When examining these criteria individually to ascertain whether or not the principals in this study managed their CI successfully, it is clear, for obvious reasons, that signal detection was not an issue. Someone died and the principal was quickly informed. Early decisions seemed to have been appropriate and included confirmation of event, talking to the deceased parents (if applicable), the informing and gathering of critical support people, delegation of tasks if not previously set out, and informing key community members.

Incident containment for a CI in a school involving death is not an appropriate measuring criterion as the CI affects the community and is impossible to keep within the organization (i.e., the school). However, appropriate inclusion of the community is critical for effective CI management and the principals in this study were highly aware of this need.

Business resumption occurred quickly in all cases. The longest break from

classes was a week in a multi-death event with many schools resuming classes immediately and often having a day off for the funeral. Needless to say, the classes underwent changes as CI teams interacted with the school and classes most directly affected worked through the acceptance of the death in the days immediately following the event.

The effects on learning relates to policy and procedural changes which occur because of a critical incident. Changes in policy were very dramatic for schools that had no or minimal written policies. Typical outcomes included the creation of a CI manual. For schools that were experienced and had manuals the process was one of review and refinement of existing policies and procedures. Not to be forgotten is the individual learning that occurred for all the principals whether in was their first or their fifth CI.

Regarding effects on reputation, the CI created an opportunity for the principals to forge new alliances in the community and to be seen in another light other than as just, "the principal." Furthermore, a human dimension for the principals became available if the principal took the opportunity to connect with people who were assisting at the school or outside events (i.e., wake, funeral).

Resource availability (e.g., counsellors, VP) was highly mixed. The larger (500+) public and Catholic schools had an abundance of resources. Some of the smaller schools had to make do with the people at hand. A previously mentioned, sometimes the district offices did not supply moral support or did not appear as if they cared about the event. Another resource issue was support from counselling agencies whether it was the STF (though in another incident they were praised) or lack of community support services related to counselling.

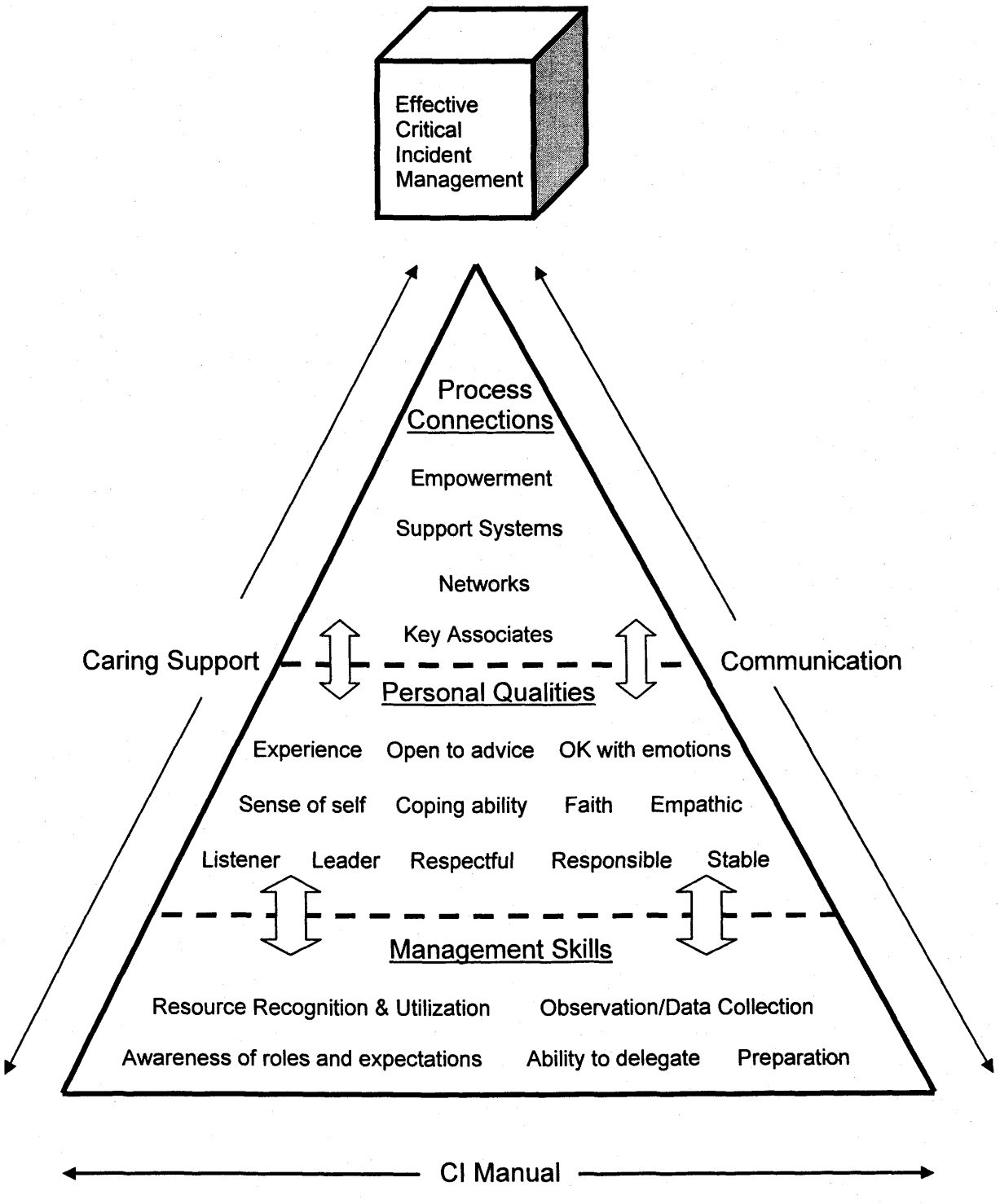
The principals in this study appeared to be engaging in effective decision-making. There were a few regrets mentioned and most of these revolved around personal interactions with staff and had little effect on the students or those directly involved in the CI.

Using the above criteria I would assess these principals as having successfully managed their CI. This does not mean it was perfect but it was effective. Some principals felt effective through the process and others felt much less effective and not sure how they were going to cope. Yet, at the end of the day, their concern and love for the students and the support they received whether from the counsellor or the community carried them through the process no matter how difficult it was personally.

Model of Effective Critical Incident Management

In Figure 6.4, a Model of Effective Critical Incident Management is presented that is based on the data gleaned from the interviews and data interpretation. The Figure shows a cube, representing effective critical incident management (ECIM), floating above a triangle, representing the principals' qualities, skills and process connections (valued and goal-directed relationships with individuals and groups) that constitutes and leads to ECIM. The three sides of the triangle, caring support, manual, and communication are the essential and minimal elements that must be in place to assure ECIM. Furthermore, the sides of the triangle, caring support and communication, occur at all levels of the process (as indicated by the arrows) from, for example, pre-crisis policy formation, which would be included in management skills, to creation of community networks, which would be included in process connections.

Figure 6.4 Model of Effective Critical Incident Management



The internal levels are composed of the principal's management skills at the base, their personal qualities in the middle, and process connections at the top. The lines separating the levels are dashed to indicate the permeability of their constituent parts and processes. For example, if the principal is responsible (level 2) he or she will have a CI team in place (level 1) which also is part of networking (level 3). Personal qualities are situated in the middle as these qualities affect both management skills and process connections.

The model is hierarchal in that the management or logistic skills form the base upon which higher order skills, like process connections, rest. Higher order skills are wasted if there is no direction as laid out in a critical incident manual which is the starting block of the entire model. The leader's personal qualities mediate or indicate the degree to which higher order effects (i.e., process connections) will be established. These process connections lead not only to basic CI management but also effective and healthy re-integration and assimilation of the changed environment for all stakeholders to the highest degree possible.

Effective critical incident management is the sum total of structure and process working together to form a matrix of effective actions (e.g., calling an assembly to announce a death) and healing experiences. The principal should be directly or indirectly involved in all aspects of the CI process. This process includes both structure (i.e., manual, teachers, students, parents, community, head office, school and the principal) and process connections (i.e., offering caring support, being supported, networking, creating key associates, empowerment and communication). The leader's task is to direct and focus the process such that effective action (e.g., creation of CI team) supports

healing encounters. The following section examines the constituent parts of the three internal aspects of the triangle: process connections, personal qualities and management skills.

Process Connections. There are four elements to process connections including: empowerment, support systems, networks and key associates. Empowerment is the process whereby the principal encourages and assists self, other individuals, and groups to experience themselves in new and enhanced ways. An example in this study included allowing students to raise money for a memorial of the deceased. Support is the personal systems the principal has in place to aid them in their personal coping of the crisis situation and can include spouse, friends, and family. Networks refers to the ties and connections established specifically to aid in the critical incident and includes the community, school board, head office, hospital, police, and counseling services. Key associates refer to individuals or small groups that aid with CI management and typically include the counsellor, vice-principal(s), and senior staff member(s).

Personal Qualities. These qualities have been drawn from the themes of principals' strengths, advice, and leadership. Personal qualities includes the principal's life experience, ability to take advice, being OK with emotions, having a sense of self, strong coping ability, faith, empathy, being a good listener, a leader, respectful, responsible and stable.

Previous experience with death was typically beneficial in understanding the CI and understanding the various reactions and how to support others in this difficult time. Being open to advice is an advantage as it allows the principal to expand his or her sources of support and knowledge while potentially reducing stress levels. The CI is a

highly emotional event and if the principal is not OK with their or other's emotion the principal will have a difficult time. Those principals that coped best in this study seemed to have a strong and well-developed sense of self. This sense of self helped them in coping with the stresses of the CI event. When managing a CI, coping ability refers to the individual self-management of tasks and feelings. Faith could be specific to a stated religion or have a broader meaning and context (a sense of a higher order or a philosophical belief system) and was critical when the principal was encountering difficult responses to the event. Empathy allowed the principal to join with all stakeholders in experiencing the shared grief. It is important the principal not appear unaffected by the event. If seen as empathic the principal has more leverage to positively affect the situation. Listening skills assist the principal in information gathering and appearing to care through counseling type behaviour. Being a leader refers to the willingness to take action, identify and goal and give direction on how to get there. Being respectful demonstrates a sensitivity to the individuals unique responses to the tragedy; realizing that others may respond differently than expected and to take this into account. Responsibility indicates the willingness to carry out the tasks and roles of the position. The principal, for better or worse is seen as the leader, and the stakeholders want to know that he or she can manage the event, is stable, and will not fall apart. Perceived stability by the stakeholders reassures everyone that the situation is under control and being handled effectively.

Management Skills. Management skills include an awareness of roles and expectation, the ability to delegate, being prepared, resource recognition and utilization, and observation/data collection. Awareness of roles and expectations is self explanatory

but needs to be specified as relevant in relationship to CI management from the pre-crisis to post-crisis stages. The ability to delegate is a valuable administrative skill that reduces workload, increases input, and ideally challenges and improves the skill level of those people who are at the receiving end of the delegation. Furthermore, by delegating, the principal creates a feeling of contribution and teamwork. Preparation for crisis is an area that tends to be glossed over at times due to an inherent avoidance of the emotionally difficult processes that have to be considered in ECIM. Preparedness was mentioned by the principals as essential to the process. Furthermore, through the preparation process resources are recognized and utilized, whether it is setting up CI teams or in creating the manual. Finally, in order to prepare, recognize and utilize these resources, the principal must be able to discern, through observation, who may be of assistance and what resources are available? Also, the principal must constantly acquire information (data collection) either through their own senses or by extending themselves through others at all stages of the critical incident. The keen observer will know how the school is reacting to the CI (in this case, observing is more than looking and includes feeling).

External Elements. The sided of the triangle are composed of caring support, communication, and the critical incident manual. The CI manual, which forms the base of the triangle, gives direction and focuses on the actions to be accomplished. These directives or tasks have to be communicated; thus, communication forms one side of the triangle. The other side of the triangle is formed by caring support which is the quality the leader ideally exhibits to encourage mutual support, healing, sense of community and hope when coping with a critical incident. Good communication enhances caring support and caring support enhances good communication. With the CI manual as the base (both

literally and figuratively) and good communication and caring support forming the sides of the triangle, a process is engaged that is directed towards effective critical incident management.

Implications

The facts have been gathered, the data analyzed, themes deduced, questions answered; now all that remains is examining how the findings impact on theory, practice and future research.

Implications for Theory

The principals' experience reflected and supported Mumby and Putnam's (1992) concept of bounded emotionality. Following the conceptual criteria espoused by Mumby and Putnam, the principals in this study were aware of their limitations and constraints and sought out support and linkages with those in a position to assist in the crisis. The principals were nurturing, caring, responsible and committed to creating connection with all stakeholders while supporting the school and larger community simultaneously.

Unlike traditional conceptualizations of male leaders as unemotional, the male principals in this study were emotional even if some were not comfortable in expressing their emotions. Finding that the principals are emotional supports Mumby and Putnam's (see also Berry & Pennebaker, 1993; Hearn, 1993; Parkin, 1993) beliefs that males in the workplace are emotional. The male principals further demonstrated that they were able to engage in caring types of behaviour that would historically be assigned to women. Caring was identified by both male and female principals as an essential element in school management.

What is not accounted for in the concept of *bounded emotionality* is how leaders

are able to work well within this paradigm even though they see themselves as operating more from a rational paradigm. It is as if two processes are operating simultaneously; one, how they (principals) relate to others and, two, how the principals related to themselves. As stated previously, this may be a function of necessity in order to cope and manage the situation. However, there was one case (Tony) whose emotional expressive process changed between first and second interviews (there was a new death between the first and second interview). This change to a more expressive and sharing process of internal emotional states can and did occur with positive results. Somehow Tony was able to manage the critical incident without having to compartmentalize his emotions. Again, part of the explanation for this is offered by Blackmore (1989), Jaggar (1997), and Mumby and Putnam (1992) who suggested that this is possible when emotions are valued by the prevailing culture and specifically by the organization within which one works. It was not clear that Tony felt the school culture particularly encouraged or discouraged this approach. Possibly, he was responding to overwhelming emotions in a flexible manner and incorporated his response into the leadership tasks as it happened. Tony did state that in the process he discovered the value of this new approach and simultaneously created a new paradigm for others to engage in if they wanted (teachers and students responded in kind). This process that Tony moved into is supported by Poland and Pitcher (1992) who said that there is a "need to model expression of emotion and allow students a range of emotions" (p. 90).

If a culture of bounded emotionality can be encouraged, then principals may be able to give themselves the kind of nurturing that they so willingly and freely give to others while still managing effectively. Effective management is supported by what

Blackmore (1989), Jaggar (1997), and Noddings (1984) would call interdependency. When interdependency is acknowledged, the principal is freer to seek support and not have to appear in control of both tasks and emotions. At the other end of the spectrum, Susan and Henry spoke to the dangers of appearing unemotional during a CI – not appearing concerned or affected by the crisis. Showing vulnerability during times of crisis offsets remoteness or appearance of uncaring by enhancing connection – we are all in this together with similar emotional reactions.

Alex is a good example supporting theories about emotion providing knowledge about oneself in relationship to self, others and society (Artz, 1994; Jaggar, 1997; Viscott, 1976). He stated this most clearly when he said,

> It helps you in a lot of ways, I mean, you can use those experiences to help you make decisions in so many different areas. I think it can make you amore patient person, a more understanding person . . . I'm not as much a hard ass you might say that I used to be. . . . You see human nature at its best and its worst, at its happiest and at its saddest and the whole gamut of human emotions. So, you know, you get some wisdom from that. (P281L25-34)

Wisdom, a word seldom heard or exhibited in our modern world dominated by consumerism, business orientation and lack of personal time for inner reflection was referred to by the more experienced principals. With Alex's words in mind, I will now examine what are the implications for practice that this study indicates.

Implications for Practice

A number of areas stand out as being open for examination for improved practices and policies. The most obvious are crisis management and head office response (crisis management is an all encompassing theme and the major implications are presented here. For more discrete elements the reader may wish to refer back to the sections on Principals' Learnings and Advice).

Implications for practice point to the need for:

1) *Critical Incident management training.* As indicated in Chapter Four, no training was offered in either undergraduate or graduate schooling. There was minimal training offered or taken and most principals received their training in the heat of the battle. Obviously this is not an optimal situation and needs to be addressed. As no formal training exists within current Bachelors and Masters programs I suggest a) lobbying occurs to include such training within formal programs b) the Saskatchewan Education Leadership Unit offer training in critical incident management and c) outside consultants or experienced in-house educators be taken on to train and upgrade principals' knowledge of critical incident management.

2) *Critical Incident stress management training.* Again, the above suggestions apply to the stress aspect of critical incident training and ideally would be part of a total training package.

3) *Formal debriefing for the principal whether they think they need it or not.* This is a critical aspect of a holistic approach of support for the principal. This research clearly demonstrated the reluctance on the principals' part to seek outside assistance and at a minimum, as is standard with critical incident policies in many organizations, a formal debriefing should occur after the event. Sometimes an informal debriefing was mentioned but this is not enough. Also, ongoing follow-up is recommended as negative effects from managing a CI may not appear immediately and may be actively hidden by the principal.

4) *Formalized system of administrative support during crisis events.* As there should be a written protocol for the principal to follow in managing a CI, so should there be one

for superintendents and directors. The essence of the advice given by the principals was that when support was offered or given by head office the principal felt supported and taken care of. When it was not offered, they felt abandoned and not cared for. A critical incident does not stop within the community where the death occurred but, like the pebble thrown on a still pond, the ripples created move and spread throughout the district and indeed the province. With major events (e.g., the Taber shooting, avalanche in the Rockies with multiple deaths) the ripples move across the nation and even internationally. Head office ignores its principals at their peril.

5) *Policy and procedures for CI practice sessions and updating of teams and networks*. This aspect of critical incident management has its own listing because even with schools that have comprehensive protocols in place, review, practice and updating are often avoided. Though principals see this facet of CI management as their responsibility, follow-up support from Division would be appropriate.

6) *Establishment of susceptibility markers, information and ongoing communication from head office with principals so as to alert head office about possible need for additional support.* Principals, in this study, who were negatively impacted by the CI did not seek outside support. Education about the negative consequences of managing CIs and formal intervention through debriefing, CISM procedures, and or follow-up by directors and or superintendents would be helpful. Also, Division office that has up-to-date information regarding susceptibility factors and the status of their principals regarding these factors would be in a better position to support their principals.

7) *A suggestion from one of the principals was to create a buddy system – an experienced principal with an inexperienced one (regarding a critical incident).* Having

an experienced person to refer to, bounce ideas off, or get support was seen as a wonderful opportunity to take advantage of the experience of others in the field and as a way for the experienced principal to give back to other principals their experience and support. This offer was made by principals in the study. This type of support system not only has the benefit of immediate help during the crisis but of further strengthening the bonds between principals in a division.

Implications for Future Research

This dissertation examined the principal's emotional experience of managing a critical incident involving death(s). It was a post hoc self-report which as a research protocol has inherent weaknesses (e.g., memory, bias, and impression management). These weaknesses were not problematic to the main question of this research, the principal's emotional experience, but might have influenced or limited answers to the secondary questions of leadership and communication. I heard the story of CI management from one perspective; the principal's. The rest of the players need to be heard to get their points of views and see if there is congruence or not with the principal's assessment of the situation.

Specifically, this leads to the question of the effectiveness of crisis management in the schools. This study looked at only ten principals' viewpoints and probably is limited as well by the self-selection nature of the methodology (i.e., principals who had mismanaged their CI did not participate). A survey of other stakeholders in the process might determine to what extent crisis situations are managed effectively. Then a determination could be made as to whether or not this level of effectiveness is acceptable and what changes, if any, need to be implemented. The exploratory nature of this

research and the themes that were discussed will, it is hoped, give some direction to the types of questions needed to elicit valuable information for future research in this area.

The findings in this study showed that, when possible, most principals prefer to use a team approach when managing a crisis. It may be a small team composed of the principal and the counsellor, or a large team involving administration members, teachers, counsellor and community resources and personnel. This is different from previous research conducted by Ziokowski and Willower (1991) that stated most principals tend to manage crises by themselves. Is this an artifact of this particular study or has a change occurred in the intervening twelve years? A survey of principals to determine leadership styles would be most helpful to make this determination and see if shared leadership styles during crisis are more prevalent or not than classical management styles of leadership.

Another research project that this study points to is defining the effectiveness of the relationship between the principal and his or her division office. Does the principal feel supported or not and if not why not. This could lead to important information for division and head office to improve, if needed, this critical relationship.

During the research it became evident that some participants were overly stressed in their role as principal and others were not. Research on personality, belief systems, and lifestyle regarding personal and professional effectiveness could lead to better hiring and support for principals.

My personal experience is that there is much talk in academia for engaging in reflective practice in the fields of education or psychology. The question of interest is whether principals are aware of this concept and if they are, do they do it, and if they do,

how do they do it considering their busy schedules?

I think the most obvious study that flows from the present one is the need to expand out from the findings of these ten principals to determine (e.g., survey) the experience of the principals in the province regarding critical incidents. There is also a need for basic information regarding prevalence rates in urban, rural, band and northern schools.

As was designed, this study covered a wide range of school types including a colony school, a band school, rural and urban schools, elementary and high schools. My sense of the band school was that there are a number of different problems and stressors that exist for these communities that do not exist in the non-band school. Research to determine what these differences are (if any) may help to focus policy and support in an effective manner.

An issue that surfaced during proposal defence concerned the time frames of the interviews in relationship to the critical incident. One suggestion was that the interviews occur as the event is happening or shortly thereafter. The original timelines I had proposed suggested the interviews occur not less than six months after the incident and no more than six years post incident. These timelines were relaxed and one interview occurred seven weeks after the CI and some principals referred to incidents that had occurred more than six years ago. In retrospect, seven weeks appeared too soon, at least with Sherri. She was, according to her own words, still in a state of shock and seemed unable to assimilate the experience.

The interviews with principals who managed CIs longer than six years previously did not seem to be negatively impacted by the passage of time. Their memories were

sometimes fuzzy on minor details but otherwise the recall was as if the event had happened in the recent past. This does not surprise me. In therapy, I have clients who talk about tragic events that have occurred twenty years ago as if it were yesterday.

I suggest that in future research of highly emotional events that a determination be made as to the participants' ability to communicate their experience prior to interviewing. Each individual is unique in their recovery time and this should be taken into account.

Finally, and following from the previous statement, due to the subject matter of this research being highly evocative of past memories with potentially strong and negative emotional content, it would be advisable that during the ethical review that not only should there be the advisement of support services (i.e. EAP or private counseling) for participants but also follow up after the interviews to see how the participants are doing and if they need support and follow-up services.

Unique Contributions of the Study

Contributions of this research include: mapping out of the principals' critical incident process and the accompanying emotional states and intensity levels; identifying susceptibility markers; explaining the relationship between the themes identified and critical incidents; and identifying caring support, communication, and having a CI manual as key components for successful critical incident management. These findings led to the creation of a model for Effective Critical Incident Management (ECIM).

This study, for the first time, gives voice to the principals who have managed a CI involving a death (there have been a couple of individual reports by administrators and principals describing their experience but they focused on the managerial aspects). Quotations were used extensively so that the principals' emotional experience, concerns,

internal and external support systems, caring for others, management, people strategies, learnings, and advice could be brought forth.

The theme of caring support is not identified in the literature on crisis management other than as empathy or concern. The depth and complexity of this theme is a contribution as it points to the active nature of this activity. It is venturing forth and looking for engagement with the students, staff, parents and community. It is demonstrating leadership through an outward show of caring through action and feelings. This emotional nurturing is a cornerstone of the feminist writings presented in Chapter One concerning responsible relationships in community and organizations.

This study identified and makes explicit the importance of supportive communication between superintendents and directors with their principals. It requires very little effort from Head Office but has long-lasting negative effects if not carried out.

Another contribution is in identifying the lack of training for critical incident and critical incident stress management both in the College of Education and in the school divisions. It also points out the reluctance of principals to keep their critical incident teams up to date and in practicing for a crisis as well as death education for the students. Even though there is a reluctance to engage in active preparation there was at least five principals who voiced a desire to have their own Trauma Emergency Response Team. [Possibly, this would engage these principals more in the CI management and would take care of some of their ambivalence]

Most importantly, the study has identified that some principals suffer grievously from managing a CI and do not share their experience or get support. It has been suggested in the study that, with intervention, this suffering could be ameliorated. Further

interventions could include an educational component to make principals aware of normal and pathological stress reactions (this is given in the TERT intervention but the principal may not receive it or be too busy or not inclined to hear), encouragement to seek support if needed, and a change in culture from the idea of the leader as invincible to one who has vulnerabilities and needs to practice self-care.

Another contribution is that new principals and administrators can access and benefit from the compilation of these ten principals' experience. A source work has been created that identifies key aspects of successful CI management, the process to be expected, and the difficulties and challenges to be encountered. It also makes the new principal (or any leader managing a CI) aware of the demands inherent in the task both logistically and emotionally.

Finally, with the particular experience of Tony, theories regarding the value of emotion are given credence. Tony shifted from a conventional male style of emotional expression in a leadership position (contained, little outward expression of feeling) to a free and emotionally expressive sharing of his experience with staff and students - with positive results. This style of relating is not a pre-condition for successful CI management; however, it may be one way of avoiding long-term negative sequalae.

Reflections

Reflecting back on the data analysis I realize that there were some ideas that were not elucidated to my satisfaction. I will now briefly examine these points. One, in the section on the "art" of CI management (Chapter 2) I never looked at how this related to the principals in this study. All products of art have two primary elements that comprise the creation. They are technique and creativity. In CI management the equivalents

would be management skills (technique) and emotional intelligence (creativity). As both elements are essential in art so too are they indispensable in CI management. Management skills without human connection will not provide the care and compassion that was identified by the principals as critical to effective CI management. Likewise, care and compassion without the ability to co-ordinate, delegate, and organize could lead to an emotional event going nowhere quickly. Leaders give hope, identify goals, give direction and point out how to get there using both technique and creativity – the elements of art.

This brings me to my second point. Each CI has its own unique properties yet there is also homogeneity of experience. Some distinguishing elements of a school CI are whether one person died or many, how they died, was the person new to the school or a school hero, the reaction in the school and community and what was the principal's relationship to the deceased. Not only is the incident unique, so is the principal. There are many variables and interactional effects to contend with. Yet, as some of the principals who had managed many CIs stated, it was possible to become "good" or "effective" at managing the process. There were elements that were similar from one event to the other. This proved to be the case across diverse scenarios and cultural difference whether talking about rural or urban, small or large, catholic or public or native or non-native schools.

The third point is my relationship with emotions and any effect this had on the participants through my choice of questions, how I questioned, and any biases I brought to the interview. Even though this was examined earlier, after having completed the writing I have become more aware of orientation. For example, I assumed at the

beginning that emotional expressivity was critical to effective CI management. The experience of these principals indicated that the process was not so black and white. In fact, for most of the principals, after the initial response holding their emotions in check was functional and allowed them to lead the school through the tragedy. One principal did indeed reflect my bias regarding the value of emotional expression and its compatibility with effective management. However, there were other methods of effective critical incident management regarding individual emotional expression.

Did my biases affect the selection of interview questions and the participants? Undoubtedly! Qualitative research explicitly acknowledges the effect of the researcher on the researched. But this is a two way street. The principals I interviewed were all strong-willed, intelligent and articulate. Even if I was consciously or unconsciously trying to influence them, I believe it would have been a difficult task. Furthermore, I reduced the possibility of undue influence by saying very little to the principals during the interview. As attested to by the transcriptions, other than at the beginning and end of the tapes the principals did the bulk of the talking. There was very little need for me to follow my question guide except at the end of the interview to see if any areas had been missed.

As might be expected, I was affected by the participants. I was also affected by the literature review. The literature review swayed me to a functional orientation regarding management of crises and critical incidents. Also, the work of Goleman, even though about emotional intelligence, is highly biased towards the functional aspects even when examining the relational properties of EQ. The purpose of EQ is some functional end and this is usually effective management.

The principals' main effect on me was the realization of the immensely challenging job they have and the high level of stress they had when dealing with a CI. I became sensitized to their problems, issues and emotional experience. In a sense, I did not maintain a professional distance but became a supporter and booster for the principals. I do not think this is a bad thing (the principals most likely sensed this positive regard and felt safe to share at a deep level). However, it may have limited my willingness to follow-up with probing questions into areas that may have revealed managerial weaknesses.

Lastly, there is the issue of faith and the relationship of faith to effective CI management. Even though discussed earlier, I believe that the importance of faith was not adequately reflected in the Model of effective CI management. In a sense, faith is the personal, philosophical or spiritual manual that guided the principal throughout the CI process. As the CI manual was the, *what to do* the faith manual was the *how to do* when confronted with a crisis involving death.

Concluding Remarks

I started this project with questions and curiosity about the principal's emotional reality when managing a CI and looking for answers and understanding. As seems typical of students undertaking a dissertation, the reality of research using qualitative methods leads to a body of inquiry and results that is larger than anticipated. This was definitely my experience. In the early stages I wondered if I would have enough material and now I smile in wry amusement as I write this thought. Indeed, with the data acquired I could have examined the issues from many perspectives and written a number of works. Writing this one work, however, has stretched me enough (at least for now). It is time

that I take my own advice and that of other researchers, educators and psychotherapists and reflect on this journey while healing my aching ego. For in any challenge worthy to be called a challenge, there will be bumps, bruises, detours and delays to overcome, reflect upon and eventually integrate.

This idea of taking care of self has become central in my personal life and interestingly has been reflected back to me by a number of principals from the study that I have been in contact with recently. One principal chose to move from her high school to become principal of a new elementary school as it would be taking care of her needs more. Another principal took a few weeks off at the end of May (2003) as he felt he needed down time to deal with family matters. This consideration of personal needs and even taking time off is unusual for this group. Maybe, as my supervisor suggested, it was out of our encounter (researcher and principal) and the discussion of the emotional impact of managing a critical incident that influenced this principal, to some small degree, to take time off. Of course, this may be just wishful thinking on my part. At the very least, a number of principals mentioned how the interviews were a culmination of their own healing process. I feel honoured to have helped in some small way.

If I have made a positive impact through direct contact with these principals, then I hope to have touched and influenced you, the reader, through my writing. I would wish that you take away, at the very least, as I have, an appreciation for the magnitude and complexity of the principal's task while managing a critical incident. The demands are enormous both physically and psychologically and it is through the principal's dedication, hard work, and most importantly – love – that the critical incident is managed with care and compassion. Effective critical incident management seems to be the

combination of the ability to focus on the tasks at hand (guided by a manual), effective communication skills and the ability to demonstrate care and compassion to all stakeholders of the school. With these three ingredients the principal should be able to effectively manage a critical incident.

Finally, I have hope that principals who read this work will do for themselves what they do for others. Show compassion in both thought and deed and take time to take care of your self!

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Appendix A

Crisis Index

Crisis Index

Source: *Crisis Management*, Mitroff and Pearson (1993).

Appendix B

An Action Plan

An Action Plan

The following is an action plan that Oates (1988) created for administrators following a student death.

The school principal meets with all faculty and staff to inform them of the death and the planned response. (If no meeting is possible, a detailed memorandum is given to all faculty and staff.) Each teacher is given an announcement about the death to be read in class. (*This announcement should not be read over the public address system.*)

At the faculty meeting, the school counselor (or other mental health professional) provides a list of suggestions for assisting distraught students and answers questions. The rooms where students can be sent for counseling are included on the list.

1) A counselor follows the deceased student's class schedule throughout the day to help students clarify feelings and concerns they may have about their classmate's death.

2) A designated individual removes personal effects of the deceased from classroom and/or lockers to be given to the next of kin.

3) Near the end of the school day, the principal, using the public address system, calls for a corporate moment of silence in memory of the deceased. He/she also gives information about the funeral or where this information will be posted. Students who may need further assistance are encouraged to consult the counseling staff or join loss and grief management groups.

4) Several days after the event, the crisis management task force meets to "debrief" and consider the effectiveness of the planned response.

Appendix C

Global Recovery Actions

Global Recovery Actions

In a similar but more global fashion, Maggio and Terenzi (1993) offer five administrative actions to aid in organizational recovery. These are:

1) Disseminate accurate information. This is critical for the maintaining of functional interpersonal relations during highly charged times and for killing rumors before they start.

2) Administrators, managers, and staff members should make efforts to listen to their co-workers following a CI. This action provides support and aids in recovery as well as creating a safe open atmosphere.

3) Make efforts to provide employees with some private time, if needed. Typically staff will want to be at work. However, they may at times be reminder of painful memories and need a space in which to decompress. If a space is officially sanctioned by administration it also says to staff that it is OK to feel and need time for oneself.

4) Instruct staff members not to take the anger or other feelings expressed by their coworkers personally. After a CI emotions can be confused and confusing for everyone. Knowing this can provide a sense of understanding for those with difficulties.

5) Lead by example. Acknowledge to the staff how you are feeling. Realize that in times of crisis staff is looking to you for leadership. Show that you too will partake of support services. This demonstrates that you believe in the interventions and are not above others.

Appendix D

Stress Response Symptoms

Stress Response Symptoms

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any incident that causes emergency service personnel to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interface with their ability to function either at the scene or later). Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite *normal,* for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have through a horrible event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and the support of loved ones the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage by themselves.

Here are some very common signs and signals of a stress reaction.

Physical	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
Fatigue	Blaming someone	Anxiety	Change in activity
Nausea	Confusion	Guilt	Change in speech patterns
Muscle tremors	Poor attention	Grief	Withdrawal
Twitches	Poor decisions	Denial	Emotional outbursts
Cheat pain	Heightened or lowered alertness	Severe panic (rare)	Suspiciousness
Difficulty breathing		Emotional shock	
Elevated BP	Poor concentration	Fear	Change in usual communications
Rapid heart rate	Memory problems	Uncertainty	Loss or Increase of appetite
Thirst	Hypervigilance	Loss of emotion control	Alcohol consumption
Headaches	Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people	Depression	Inability to rest
Visual difficulty	Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings	Inappropriate emotional response	Antisocial acts
Vomiting	Poor problem solving	Apprehension	Nonspecific bodily complaints
Grinding of teeth	Poor abstract thinking	Feeling overwhelmed	Hyper-alert to environment
Weakness	Lose of time, place or person orientation	Intense anger	Startle reflex intensified
Dizziness	Disturbed thinking	Irritability	Pacing
Profuse sweating	Nightmares	Agitation	Erratic movements
Chills	Intrusive images	etc.	Change in sexual functioning
Shock symptoms			etc.
Fainting			
etc,			

Source: International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. (1996)

Appendix E

Demographic, Opening and Guiding Questions

Demographic, Opening and Guiding Questions

Demographic Information Questions

Age: ____

Female: ___ Male: ___

Caucasian: _____ Aboriginal: _____

Education? Bachelor: ___ Master's: ___ PhD: ___

How many years have you been a principal? ___

How many years have you been a principal at your current school? ____

Would you define your school as 1) Urban _____ 2) Rural _____

Is your school 1) Public _____ 2) Catholic _____

Opening Questions

How many Critical Incidents have you experienced at this school as the principal?

Did the school receive support during the crisis and if so what kind of support and from whom?

How well did the school cope with the critical incident?

How well did the teachers cope with the critical incident?

How well did the students cope with the critical incident?

How well did you cope with the critical incident?

Is there a CISM Team available for your area?

What was your experience of working with the CISD team?

Does your school have its own CISD Team?

If not, do you currently have plans to institute a CISD Team?

Does your school have a crisis plan?

If yes, does this plan include the type of crisis defined as a critical incident (e.g., murder, suicide, car accident, accidental death on the school property)?

Does your school have a disaster plan (e.g., fire, tornado, flood)?

Guiding Questions

Could you please describe a critical incident that you experienced?

What were the emotions you experienced?
a) at the time of the incident
b) immediately after the incident had been managed
c) since the incident

How did you cope with your emotions? Was it difficult or easy? Did you need support? Did you get it?

How did you cope with the emotions of others?

How has the experience affected you?

How has the experience affected the school?

How did the incident affect your ability to communicate effectively?

How did the incident affect inter-personal dynamics with students, staff and family?

How did the incident affect your decision-making ability?

Appendix F

Data/Transcript Release Form

Data/Transcript Release Form

Thank you for participating in the study until this point. You have now received two sets of transcripts. Please review them and make any additions, deletions or suggestions to insure accuracy and coherence so that you feel the transcripts accurately depict what you wish to communicate. When you are satisfied with the contents please read and sign the following:

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my audiotapes for this study, and acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my interview with Steven Lake. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Steven Lake to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/transcript form for my own records.

My signature indicates that I have read, understood, and agree to the content of this form.

Name of participant _____

Signature of participant: _____

Phone # of participant: _____

Address of participant: _____

_____

_____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G

Information and Consent Form - Director
Director's Cover Letter

Information and Consent Form - Director

My name is Steven Lake and I will be conducting my doctoral research through the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. The study is called The Emotional Experience of Leaders Managing Critical Incidents. Dr. Keith Walker of the University of Saskatchewan is my supervisor.

The purpose of the study is to examine what was the emotional experience of leaders during and following a critical incident. The affective component of leaders and leadership will be examined to see how 1) leaders manage their personal emotions at the time of the crisis, 2) how leaders manage the emotions of the group/organization and 3) what are the long-term emotional sequlae from managing a critical incident. Other areas of interest include, a) communication, b) interpersonal relationships and c) decision making. These areas will be examined as they constitute important aspects of leadership itself and possible outcome variables of critical incidents.

For the purposes of this study leaders are delimited to principals of the Public and Catholic school systems in Saskatchewan and critical incidents are delimited to traumatic events involving the death(s) of students, teachers or staff.

Please read and sign the following if you are in agreement.

This is to acknowledge that I have been informed about and agree to the following:

1. I have been advised about the nature and purpose of the study (see paragraphs 1-3)

2. The results of this research will be used for the completion of Steven Lake's doctoral dissertation in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. These results may also be used for presentations and publications.

3. If I have any questions or concerns about the research I may contact the following individuals:

Researcher: Steven Lake
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
Ph: 306-384-7561
Fax: 306-966-7020
e-mail: psychhealth@sk.sympatico.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Keith Walker
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
Ph: 306-966-7623
Fax: 306-966-7020
e-mail: keithwalker@usask.ca

4. I hereby give permission for Steven Lake to contact and include principals in my school division for his study.

My signature indicates that I have read, understood, and agree to the content of this form.

Signature of Director: _____

Name of Director: _____ (please print)

Ph# of Director: _____

Address of Director: _____

_____

_____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Directors' Cover Letter

Steven Lake
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
Ph: 306-384-7561
Fax: 306-966-7020
e-mail: psychhealth@sk.sympatico.ca

May 10/01

Dear Director:

Hello. My name is Steven Lake and I am conducting a doctoral dissertation at the University of Saskatchewan in Educational Administration. The study is called The Emotional Experience of Leaders Managing Critical Incidents. I am examining the emotional impact on school principals of managing a critical incident involving death.

I am requesting your permission to contact principals under your jurisdiction. Contact may be established through critical incident team leaders, word of mouth, or suggestions from directors and superintendents. Naturally, the principal's participation is totally voluntary and all ethical protocols of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the University of Saskatchewan will be followed.

This proposal was presented to the LEADS executive and to the Regional directors. Both groups endorse the project. At the completion of the project an executive summary will be made available to all LEADS members.

More information about the project is contained in the consent form that follows. As the school year is rapidly coming to a close I would appreciate it if you could sign the release (if you are in agreement) and fax it to 306-966-7020 by Friday May 18, 2001.

Please contact me if you have any thoughts, ideas or questions. My contact information is on the consent form.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Steven Lake

Appendix H

Information and Consent Form: Principal

Information and Consent Form: Principal

My name is Steven Lake and I will be conducting my Doctoral research through the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. The study is called The Emotional Experience of Leaders Managing Critical Incidents. Dr. Keith Walker is the supervisor in charge.

In this study leaders are defined as principals of the public and Catholic school systems in Saskatchewan. Critical incidents are defined as traumatic events leading to the death(s) of students, teachers or staff.

The purpose of this study is to examine the emotional experience of leaders during critical incidents. The affective component of leaders and leadership will be examined to see a) how leaders manage their personal emotions at the time of crisis, b) how leaders manage the emotions of the group/organization and c) what are the long-term emotional sequlae from managing critical incidents. Other areas of interest that will be examined include: 1) communication, 2) interpersonal relationships, and 3) decision making. These areas are included, as they constitute important aspects of leadership itself and possible outcome variables of critical incidents.

In order to gather this information I will be conducting taped interviews with the participants. This process will involve two 1 ½ hour interviews. After the first interview, transcriptions will be made available for the participant and will form the basis of discussion for the second interview.

This is to certify that I,_____, have been informed
(please print)
about and agree to the following:

1. I have been advised about the nature and purpose of the study.

2. My participation in the study is voluntary. I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

3. No personal information will be made available to my board or district supervisor.

4. I will have the opportunity to debrief and give feedback at the end of each interview.

5. Audiotapes and transcriptions, as per the University of Saskatchewan research guidelines, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and five years after the study has been accepted by the University all data will be destroyed.

6. I will have the opportunity to add, correct or delete any information from the transcript before signing off on the use of the data. Anonymity will be assured through the use of a pseudonym in all writings and, if needed, the changing of locales and other

identifying information.

7. The results of this research will be used for the completion of Steven Lake's doctoral dissertation in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. These results may also be used for presentations and publications.

8. In the event that I should need to talk to someone about distressing feelings resulting from the interviews the researcher agrees to be available for consultation and referral.

9. If I have any questions or concerns about the research or my involvement, I may contact the following individuals:

Research Supervisor: Dr. Keith Walker
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 966-7623
e-mail: keith.walker@usask.ca

Researcher: Steven Lake
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 384-7561
e-mail: psychhealth@sk.sympatico.ca

Office of Research Services: (306)-966-4053

My signature indicates that I have read and understood the content of this form.

Name of participant _____

Signature of participant: _____

Phone # of participant: _____

Address of participant: _____

_____

_____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix I

Application for Approval for Research Protocol

Application for Approval for Research Protocol

1. Name of researcher and supervisors.

1a. Steven Lake (Ph.D. candidate)
Keith Walker (Advisor)
1b. Phase I: Anticipated start date of the research study: April, 2001.
Phase II: Expected completion date of study: August, 2001.

2. Title of study.

The emotional experience of leaders managing critical incidents (CIs).

3. Abstract.

The purpose of this study is to examine the emotional experience of leaders during critical incidents. The affective component of leaders and leadership will be examined to see a) how leaders manage their personal emotions at the time of crisis, b) how leaders manage the emotions of the group/organization and c) what are the long-term emotional sequlae from managing critical incidents. Other areas of interest that will be examined include: 1) communication, 2) interpersonal relationships, and 3) decision making. These areas are included, as they constitute important aspects of leadership itself and possible outcome variables of critical incidents. In this study leaders are delimited to principals of the public and catholic school systems in Saskatchewan. Critical incidents are delimited to traumatic events which have led to the death(s) of students, teachers or staff.

4. Funding.

The research is self-funded.

5. Participants.

Participants in the research project will be selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a selection process whereby criteria is established first and then the participants are found that meet the criteria. Criteria for this project include: a) managing a CI involving the death of a student, teacher or staff member, b) being a principal at the time of the CI, and c) the event occurring at least six months prior to the interview and not longer than five years prior to the interview. Furthermore, in order to select for the widest experience and diversity of participants, the group of interviewees will include urban and rural principals, male and female, catholic and public, and Caucasian and aboriginal (at least one male and one female). For these criteria to be meet ten participants will be required. Recommendations for participation will come from district supervisors (who will give approval of the project in their district) and/or critical incident team leaders. Once a suggestion has been made that meets the above criteria the potential participant will be contacted with information about the project and asked to participate.

6. Consent.

After initial contact has been established (by phone), the project explained, criteria meet,
and the principal orally agrees to be a participant, a meeting time and place will be established. At this meeting the project will be re-explained and a written consent form presented, their rights explained and the consent form signed (see attached form). The explanation and consent form,
in accordance with accepted ethical standards, details the participants right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, the right to receive, review, and maintain a copy of the transcripts and audio-tapes even if the participant withdraws from the study.

7. Methods/Procedures.

Once the participants have been selected the second step will involve semi-structured interviews with the ten principals. The purpose of the interviews will be to discern, in greater detail, the experience of dealing with emotion as a leader during critical incidents. Areas of inquiry and guiding questions will include: did the leaders demonstrate emotionality; how did they cope with these emotions; and how did their emotions affect communication, interpersonal relationships and decision making? These interviews will form the dialogical foundation from which findings of the study will emerge (Halling, Kunz & Rowe, 1994).

The interview process itself will consist of two separate interviews of approximately one and a half (1 ½) hours each. This process will be a variation of Seidman's (1998) suggestions for interviewing in which three facets should be explored. These areas are context, the issue itself, and meaning making. In Seidman's model these three area encompass three separate interviews. For this study the first and second interview will be collapsed into one interview. After the first interview, the audio-tapes will be transcribed and a copy sent to the participant. Once they have had time to read the transcript a second interview will be arranged to further explore the content of the first interview and any meaning making that has occurred. Other sources of data include the researcher's personal logs and journal entries.

Semi-structured interviews

All interviews will be conducted between the sixth and sixtieth month of the critical incident. The interview process is designed to first create an environment of safety and mutual respect in which the interviewee feels free to share and to expound upon their thoughts, ideas, and experiences. I will begin the interview proper with some introductory questions designed to ease them into the process. These include questions about their past work experience and how they became the chief executive officer in their school. These questions will then be followed up with questions about their relationship to emotions and emotional expression. I will then ask for a description of the critical incident: how did they respond to the event and what effects if any the event had on them. I will also be prepared to ask questions about 1) how the event interacted with the principals' relationship to his or her co-workers (staff), students and parents, 2) how the event affected the principal's ability to communicate with others, and 3) how it affected

their leadership style and ability and 4) how did they cope with their emotions during and after the event? Further guiding questions can bee seen in attachment.

In the second interview the focus will be on the participants' reflections of their experience with the CI after having read the transcripts. Here, meaning making is the focal point. What meanings do the participants attribute to their leadership style, management of their emotions, and the management of the emotions of the students and staff? How do the participants interpret their own behaviour regarding self-care after the experience? How did the experience affect the principals' lives both at the school and at home? What do they see as effective and ineffective at the district level and within their own school as it concerns the emotional experience of managing a CI? These are only some of the possibilities that come to mind. The participants will no doubt bring forth unexpected areas for exploration.

8. Storage of data.

Data will be securely stored under the auspices of Dr. Keith Walker at the University of Saskatchewan for the required five years upon completion of the study at which time all data will be destroyed.

9. Dissemination of results.

The results of this study will be shared with the faculty of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan and used to complete requirements for a dissertation in the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Administration also at the University of Saskatchewan. Furthermore, the results may be used in the writing of journal articles and conference presentations.

10. Risk or Deception.

The purpose of the study is stated up front to the participants and no deception is involved at any point in the research process. Participation in the study is voluntary and anonymity of those who choose to participate in the study is assured through the use of pseudonyms in all writings. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

There is the possibility that the interview process may evoke strong emotional responses that may disturb the participant. If this occurs the researcher will make time to process this experience with the participant (the researcher is a nationally certified counsellor and a psychologist for the federal government) and make recommendations as needed to the principal's EAP or to private practitioners according to the participant's preferences.

11. Confidentiality.

The participants will be informed that there responses will be anonymous: their names will not appear anywhere in the results. The data will be securely (i.e., locked) stored for five years as is required by the University of Saskatchewan guidelines and will

not allow for any identification of the individual participants. At the five year mark all data will be destroyed. Not only will the researcher use pseudonyms but will change locale and circumstances where necessary to assure anonymity.

12. Data/Transcript Release.

Data/transcript release forms will be utilized for the participants. Each form will be signed after the participant has had the opportunity to read and revise his/her transcript and acknowledges it to be an accurate portrayal of what was said. The data/transcript release form utilized in this study is the same as that given as an example by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in behavioural Sciences Research, 2001(see attachment).

13. Debriefing and Feedback.

At the end of each interview the participant will be given the opportunity to state how the process is affecting them and to debrief as needed. Once the study has been completed an executive summary of the results will be sent to all participants. Furthermore, all participants will be informed about public access to the finished dissertation at the University of Saskatchewan's libraries.

14. Signatures.

Advisor: Dr. Keith Walker _____

Applicant: Steven Lake _____

Department Head: _____

Letter of Attestation

This letter of attestation is in relation to the inquiry audit of the Ph.D. dissertation written by Steven Lake entitled "The Emotional Experience of Leaders Managing Critical Incidents".

The purpose of the audit is to review research products maintained and submitted by the dissertation author to establish the accuracy of the records. Unlike a fiscal audit, which examines both process and product, this present inquiry audit explored the product of the research, the written documentation. The main reference used for carrying out the audit was Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Beverly Hills: SAGE (with particular reference to pages 289-331, in chapter entitled "Establishing Trustworthiness").

This study examines what is the emotional experience of leaders during and following a critical incident. The affective component of leaders and leadership was examined to see a) how leaders managed their personal emotions at the time of crisis, b) how leaders managed the emotions of the group/organization and c) what were the long-term emotional sequlae from managing critical incidents. Other areas of interest that were examined included: 1) communications, 2) interpersonal relationships, and 3) decision making. These areas were included, as they constituted important aspects of leadership and possible outcome variables of critical incidents. In this study leaders were delimited to principals of the public and Catholic school systems within Saskatchewan. Critical incidents were delimited to traumatic events involving the death(s) of students, teachers or staff.

The Audit Procedure--Verification and Accuracy of Transcripts and Tapes

1. Consent and Data/Transcript release forms

All of the 'Information and Consent' forms and school district authorization forms for the 10 participants are reviewed for signatures and completion. The forms:

a) list the participants of the study provided for the audit and
b) are signed, or
c) are attested to by senders' e-mail addresses.

2. Selection of Samples for Verification and Accuracy of Tapes to Transcripts:

a) Procedure and Observations for Tapes to Transcripts Tests:

There are 23 audio cassette tapes, including the 3 'extra' tapes. Three of the 10 participant names are randomly chosen and the two tapes for each of those three was compared to the first page of the transcript and then four times during fast-forwarding the tapes were paused to compare audio statements to the transcripts to note any discrepancies.

b) Accuracy of Quotations in Relation to Data Sources

All comparisons between tapes and transcripts were positive. The words spoken on tape were the words that appeared in transcripts.

3.Accuracy of Dissertation Chapter Four References to Transcripts:

a. Procedure and Observations for Chapter 4 references.

Of the 20 pages (86 to 106) found in Chapter Four, a random sample of five pages (numbers 90, 95, 97,100 and 102) was selected for testing. Each of the references on each page was verified to the supporting binder documents.

b. Accuracy of References in Dissertation to Tape Transcripts

All references investigated in Chapter Four were found and accurately depicted

4. Inspection of Ethics Proposal and Certificate

I have reviewed the candidate's application for approval by the Research Ethics Board and the Ethics Certificate provided by that Board. The procedures used by researcher and the protocols followed in the research are consistent with this approval. An analysis of the data reduction and interpretation of data was not considered by this audit. It remains for the researcher to turn the materials, above, over to the University for secure storage for a five year period.

5. Summary

Despite minor omissions the transcripts are accurate transcriptions of the taped interviews. The transcripts and quotations in dissertation represent a faithful record of the taped interviews.

As a result of the audit, I as auditor, testify that the transcripts and quotations which I have examined in relation to Steven Lake's dissertation are true and accurate.

Eric Campbell (signature)

Eric Campbell, B.Comm., M.B.A.(Queens) (retired member Institute of Internal Auditors and Association of College and University Auditors)

2003-11-18
(Date)

UNIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ETHICS IN BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

NAME: K. Walker (S. Lake) **BSC#:** 2001-71
Department of Educational Administration

DATE: May 22, 2001

The University Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research has reviewed the revisions to the Application for Ethics Approval for your study "The Emotional Experience of Leaders Managing Critical Incidents" (01-71).

1. Your study has been APPROVED.

2. Any significant changes to your proposed study should be reported to the Chair for Committee consideration in advance of its implementation.

3. The term of this approval is for 5 years.

I wish you a successful and informative study.

Valerie Thompson, Chair
University Advisory Committee
on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research

VT/bk

Office of Research Services, Ethics Committees, University of Saskatchewan
Kirk Hall Room 207, 117 Science Place, Saskatoon SK S7N 5C8 CANADA
Telephone: (306) 966-4053 Facsimile: (306) 966-8597 http://www.usask.ca/research/